THE RAMAYAN

Translated from the Original of Valmiki

A Modernised Version in English Prose.

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Printed and published by
D. N. BOSE.
AT THE JOYNARAYAN PRESS.
164, Cornwallis Street, Calcutta.
1927.

INTRODUCTION.

"History," says Carlyle, "is the essence of innumerable biographies", and nowhere the saying is found to be more true than when we come to the annals of ancient India. History, in the proper sense of the word, we have none of that glorious age, when India was the Queen of the East, and alone held the torch of knowledge, while the rest of the world was steeped in ignorance and darkness, but only some scraps and detached accounts of that perished civilisation, wherein our eye "overlooking the landscape of humanity runs up to the brilliant peaks of power." Yet we are not a little profited by them.

And what is history after all ?

It is neither "a fable agreed upon," as Napoleon once cynically remarked, nor a tedious scroll of long forgotten events and names. It is the record of the strivings of the national genius, as literature is the mirror of the national mind. Fortunately, here we are still in possession of sufficient materials which at once afford us a clear glimpse into the wonderful civilisation and culture that once flourished in the land and which, like a dried up river-bed, still bears the indelible marks of a mighty tide that once swept over it.

Hellenic culture, as revealed in the Homeric poems,

is yet an object of profound admiration and study in the West, but educated India cares little for her ancient glory and wisdom! Yet this is what a profound master of Greek and Latin, and one of the greatest savants of the world has said:

"If I were to look over the whole world to find out the country most richly endowed with all t wealth, power, and beauty that nature can besto in some past, a very paradise on earth, I shou point to India. If I were asked under what sky the human mind has most fully developed some of its choicest gifts, has most deeply pondered on the greatest problems of life, and has found solutions of some of them which well deserve the attention even of those who have studied Plato and Kant, I should point to India. And if I were to ask myself from what literature we, here in Europe, who have been nurtured almost exclusively on the thoughts of Greeks and Romans, and of one Semitic race, the Jewish, may draw that corrective which is most wanted in order to make our inner life more perfect, more comprehensive, more universal, in fac more truly human, a life not for this life only, b a transfigured and eternal life—again I should poi to India"

Even apart from this, a review of the past is not always a mere gratification of an idle curiosity, but sometimes the present can not be explained without the help of the past.

"There is relation between the hours of life and the centuries of time," says the philosopher, and we cannot get rid of the past even if we will. Thus even those who want to study the present-day mentality of modern India with her vast and complex social, political and religious institutions, can not do away with the history of her past, for a full and clear comprehension of the same.

"Every one of us ought to know how we have come to be what we are, so that each generation need not start again from the same point, and toil over the same ground, but, profiting by the experience of those who came before, may advance towards higher points and nobler aims."

Happily, we are not here without a chart or compass. If we only take the trouble of looking to our great Epics—the live history of the ancient Hindus—we shall at once fall upon the trend of our national genius, with all its limitations and greatness, which should not be overlooked in determining the course of national conduct. These great Epics embalm, in their immortal pages, the lives and accounts of those great national heroes, each of whom revealed a new potentiality of national life and added a fresh chapter to Indian glory.

This, is in fact the true history of India. And rightly observes Prof. Max Muller, "The true history of the world must always be the history of the few; and we measure the Himalaya by the height of

Mount Everest, we must take the true measure of India from the poets of the Veda, the sages of the Upanishads, the founders of the Vedanta and Sankhya philosophies, and the authors of the oldest law books, and not from the millions who are born and die in their villages, and who have never for one moment been roused out of their drowsy dream of life."

"Great men," says a Nineteenth Century sage, "are the inspired Texts of the Divine Book of Revelation whereof a chapter is compiled from epoch to epoch and by some named history."

This sounds like the famous aphorism of Gita ; "Sambhavami yoge yoge", which, in a nutshell, puts forth the famous Incarnation theory of the Hindus. We need not dwell upon the metaphysical difficulties that naturally arise out of such a theological doctrine. But almost all the Revealed religions are based upon some such beliefs. Salvation by syllogism is a psychological absurdity. And Professor Tiel, in his History of the Development of Religion, proves that "Word must always become 'Flesh' in order to get admission to the human heart." Thus there is an image-making tendency in every religion, and in this sense, no religion is possible without idolatry, though there need not be any idol worship. Out of this philosophy rose the vast pantheon of the Hindu Gods and Goddesses which, however, do not deny the existence of One. "Who is all pervading and all

sustaining is. One and One only; all the Gods find shelter in Him." Thus have sung the Vedas.

Apart from all such controversies, the ancient Hindus knew full well the elevating influences of a great man. They, therefore, not only honoured their national heroes but extolled them into divinity. There is something really noble in this excess of moral zeal. We are, in truth, idolaters of greatness bred and born. And what wonder is there if one feels a deep religious reverence for the character of a man who was an ideal king, an ideal son, an ideal man, an ideal brother, an ideal friend, a devoted husband, a valiant soldier, and above all a lover of humanity and truth?

If religion be a striving after moral perfection, Dr. Martineau is undoubtedly right in maintaining that from this idea of ideal perfection present in our minds, we gradually rise to the notion of an Absolute Perfect Being, towards whom "a sentiment of habitual and permanent admiration" is born. In short, man always asks for a Personal God, and sometimes even in flesh and blood, the place of which is often times supplied by an Avatar of our Sastras. And Sree Ram Chandra is one of these great Avatars. This much is for the orthodox view. But if it is held that "the tense of revelation is infinitely past," then we must call him a Super-man, for he can't be less than that, and the more we know of him is better for us. We can not escape from the

hallowing influence of such a man. And it must be admitted that in the Ramayan itself, more stress has been laid upon the Humanity than on the Divinity of Ram. "Ecco Home," as Professor Seeley might say. Gods are gods, and we feel little interest for them if they do not share in our sorrows and joys.

We think we should here enter into a timely protest against all learned and ingenious attempts to explain away the whole of Ramayan as a grand allegorical poem, depicting the progress of Aryan cultivation and civilisation into Deccan There is indeed something fascinating about these interpretations, as in the seductive Dawn myth of Professor Max Muller, in explaining away many mysterious Vedic phenomena. Yet to treat the whole of Ramayan as an Agricultural poem is nothing but blasphemy pure and simple. To rely upon the derivative roots of Ram and Sita and to brush aside everything else is neither judicious nor sound.

The Historical basis and the great antiquity of the Ramayan have more than amply been proved. It is too late to be ambitious.

True, in ancient India, as the Hindus were "more inclined to meditate than to narrate," therefore the development of "formal literary history was checked by contemplation and poesy." But there is no country whose history is absolutely blank. The earth herself, before the birth of any historian, has written her

awful history in Geological strata and calcareous fossils. Every age has left its history in its own relics. The patient enquirer needs only dig out these debris to read the past, as the Zoologist reconstructs an extinct species from some scattered fossil-remains found in rocks or river-beds. And if we do the same, we may induce the silent past to tell its tale in its own language.

The historic remains of Ram Chandra's time are the strongest proofs of its historical truth. No amount of theory can get over this. A simple tour from Ayodhya to Rameswaram will settle all doubts, yet if any formal authority of history is needed, we can do no better than refer to Col. Todd's immortal Annals of Rajputana dealing with men sprung from Ram Chandra's loins. It is ridiculous to contend any more about its historical basis, though "the outline is entirely lost in colour."

Still we maintain that to study our ancient institutions we must look to our Epics and Purans than merely rely on foreign accounts, as, Hiouen Thsang's Travels, or McCrindel's "India As Described By Classical Authors." They are helpful no doubt but do not go to the roots. Here is enough food for patient research. In the Ramayan itself we find a high order of civilisation existing side by side with some strange practices and customs, some of which are quite Vedic, while the rest is of doubtful origin. There are also

other things that will ever perplex a questioning reader, e.g. :—

Who are the Rakshasas? Some say, they are Non-Aryans (a vague term by itself) or the dark primitive people of India whom the white Hindus conquered. They were savage people. But the civilisation and prosperity that we find in Lanka, the capital of the Rakshasas' chief, could not only vie with that of Ayodhya, but in some points were even superior to that of the Aryan capital. How can we then reconcile these two contradictory things? Have then all hedious practices been attributed to them out of sheer prejudice or malice, because they represented a different type of civilisation? But Ravan worshipped the Aryan God, Siva, and followed the same faith!

Secondly, who are the Vanaras? Some say they are anthropoid apes; while others, more scientific, are of opinion that they are Darwin's missing link, while the third maintains, that they were the aborigines of Deccan. That they were not monkeys is quite evident. They had their kingdoms, and other civil institutions, yet some ape-like tricks and other arborial habits have been freely attributed to them! But the devotion, loyalty, intelligence, love of truth, high sense of morality and skill they exhibit are rare not only in apes or missing link, but even in our present civilised age! Thus every theory which we so readily pounce upon appears to be negatived by some incontrovertible facts!

Thirdly, the occult power we find, shared in by some ascetics and Brahmans is astounding, but the metamorphic power of their curses is simply astonishing. Even some material objects surpass our power of comprehension. Some of the. arms and weapons described in the Epic and the description of the Puspaka that steers through the sky like a modern aeroplane, appear to be quite perplexing. What are they? Are these the mere lucubrations of a hypersensative eastern mind (yet where flourished Vedantas and the Upanishads) or there is some substratum of truth underneath them ("where more is meant than meets the ear") is more than what we can say. Why from the very beginning, the bent of Indian genius differed so widely from that of the Greeks and the Romans may be a fruitful source of enquiry. It is needless to multiply more.

As for the great antiquity of the poem, we can only repeat what Professor Jacobbi has said, "The inner kernel of the Ramayana was composed much earlier than the Mahabharata, though the former has subsequently been modified by some later poets."

Nay more, it had, from time immemorial, invited many literary intruders to come with their country-side tales and weave them into the main texture of the poem,—a fact which has rendered the original an arduous reading to most of the modern readers. And the Ramayan too, like most of the classics, is now more admired than read. Yet we hope

that, like the Illiad in ancient Greece, the Ramayan should be found under the pillow of every patriotic Hindu who still feels pride for the glorious achievements of his illustrious ancestors.

"I may observe with all respect for Valmiki, that the Ramayan even in the sonorous and dignified Sanskrit will hardly bear reading through," observes an acute critic. Certainly, Ramayan could not be an exception to most of the great books of antiquity which are chiefly collections or anthologies, even including Homer's Illiad. In fact, the tropical garden of poetry has been overrun with noxious weeds.

This has rendered the painful necessity of applying our irreverent scissors in pruning down literary prolixity and mere verbosity in many places, where it has encroached upon the main narrative, or clouded the real issue, or rendered the whole piece a tedious reading. This is an audacity, we admit, but considering modern taste, and multifarious demands that are incessantly made upon the time of a modern reader, we have ventured to expunge all verbosity and unnecessary details for which most of the modern readers have little taste, or find little time or energy to feel their way through a regular forest of literary brambles. Economy is looked for in every department of life,—even in reading, since he has now so many things to read. And herein lies our justification for the present publication of the Epic.

This, of course, no way means any disrespect to the great poet. Time has adorned the stately mansion with wall-flowers and other blossoms (the lovely evidence of its hoary age) and the tributes of unknown poets that have swelled the mighty current of Valmiki's poetry.

Now, to descant upon the merits of Ramayan would be, in the words of Shakespeare, as useless as "to gild the refined gold or to paint the lily." Yet to a modern reader many things might appear quite absurd and dull. He may even be shocked by excessive hyperboles and supernatural elements of the Epic. But certain allowances must be made to its hoary age and the state of belief that characterised the society of that time. Literature of every age is tinged by its atmosphere. Ramayan too was coloured by its environments. "The first fruits of English Society is hypocrisy," writes M. Taine. "It ripens here under the double breath of religion and morality; we know their popularity and dominion across the Channel. * * * Mr Pecksniff is not found in France. His speech would disgust Frenchman." If such a thing could be said by a French critic about Dickens' creations, what wonder is there if our tastes differ about many literary creations of the past? Yet who abides by Mathew Arnold's dictum, that "poetry is at bottom a criticism of life," cannot afford to overlook Ramayan as an Epic. Still we are afraid that a modern reader

will not feel much enthusiastic for the literary charms of Ramayan specially through the medium of a translation. We have, therefore, tried to be brief and simple than to conform to the exacting demands of a learned critic. Hence we have attempted to bring the whole thing within a reasonable compass for which we could not but keep ourselves strictly along the main channel. But we have not left out a single incident with its mental and physical accompaniments that finds its place in the original. Such cuts that hurt popular sentiments are improper, if not impertinent. We are, however, guilty of no such offence, though sometimes we have taken the liberty of condensing unnecessary details and many country-side tales, and redundant anecdotes into a close compact.

In short, the present translation is a modernised version of the original. But we have omitted nothing which may be missed, though we have tried our best to adopt it to modern taste. And for this, we have tried to be faithful more to the spirit than to the form of the original. Some latitudes in translating such a work are inevitable. Thus, where we thought that word per word translation would render the whole thing unreadable, we have taken the liberty of a free translation there. To have a host of adjectives attached to every noun, in a monstrously long sentence is anything but agreeable to modern taste, and we make no secret of doing away a lot of them, which

could be done without altering the sense in any manner. In some cases, alterations were necessary in the structure of sentences and in the sequence of words. There has also been a laxity in the use of articles. We have thus attempted in our humble way to present the book in a simple, readable form, specially to enable those who are ignorant of Sanskrit to see how the thing has been treated in the original.

A few words more are necessary to indicate the line of our translation. Of the two famous recensions of the poem—the Benares recension is more poetic than the Bengal one, and we have followed the Benares recension in the main, though here and there we have taken the help of the Bengal text. In translating proper names we have, in the majority of instances, dropped the final 'a' after a name, e.g., instead of "Lakshmana" and "Ramayana", we have spelt "Lakshman" and "Ramayan."

We have not excluded the Uttarakanda which in all probability appears to be a later addition by some other poet or poets, as the main story properly ends in the Sixth Kanda. Divisions of cantos differ in different readings, and as we have condensed sometimes different cantos into one, we have thought it advisable to divide the book into chapters than into cantos. Important historical, philosophical or literary references have been given in their proper places.

We have not hesitated to draw largely upon our illustrious predecessors who had previously dealt with the subject. As for our poor language, simplicity is our best excuse.

Lastly, with our literary limitations, arising out of our poor scholarship, we can not but feel diffidence in presenting such a book in our poor form to the public—a book that has loomed large for centuries over the destinies of millions of people, and will continue to do so for ages to come. And for our ambitious venture we bow down to the spirit of immortal Valmiki, the jewel prints of whose hallowed feet we have dared to follow.

CALCUTTA
January, 1927.

MAKHAN LAL SEN

INVOCATION.

Glory be unto Valmiki, the First of Poets and the Inventor of Verse, whose welling pity for a poor bird transformed itself into gushing Poetry, and whose divine lyre has given us the deathless lay of Ram that absolves·one from sin !

Where is the man who has listened to his immortal song has not felt its enthralling charms or felt not elevated or purified by the sacred lay ?

Glory to him, "the Morning-star of Song," whose fame has overstepped the limits of Time and Space. May we, by his grace, follow the jewel prints of his hallowed feet.

(Translator's humble tribute.)

BALAKANDAM

THE RAMAYAN

CHAPTER I.

VALMIKI AND NARADA.

The great sage Valmiki asked Narada, the foremost of the saints, versed in the Vedas, "Tell me, O Saint! who is, at present, the most accomplished, learned, powerful, noble-minded, truthful, firm in vows, of excellent moral character, and of grateful turn of mind? Who ministers to the good of every creature? Who is well familiar with manners and customs of men? Who is peerless, clever, and beautiful to look at? Who is not subject to anger or malice; yet whom when enraged even the gods fear to face in the battle? Whose prowess can protect the world from evil? On whom Fortune has emptied her choicest blessings! Who is the best of kings, and can justly be compared with Indra, the king of heaven? O Sage! You alone know who is so qualified on earth. Great is my curiosity to hear."

Then, the great saint Narada, cognisant of the three worlds, cheerfully said, "O hermit! The great qualities just now mentioned by you, are rarely to be found in ordinary mortals. Let me, however, remember and tell you who is such a qualified person on earth."

There is a famous king by the name of Ram, born in the line of great Ikshwaku. He is of subdued senses and of exceeding might. He has mighty arms reaching up to the knees. His throat is marked with three auspicious conch-shell lines. He has high and broad shoulders, wide chest, well-formed head, graceful forehead, strong-set jaws, and deeply embedded collar bones. His eyes are large, and his colour is of soft lustrous green. He is neither too tall, nor very short, but well formed and of symmetrical limbs. This highly beautiful and mighty Ram is supremely intelligent, and of eloquent speech. He is upright, true to his vows, modest and observer of laws. His character is highly pure. He is famous, wise, and possesses the knowledge of self. He is the protector of all, defender of religion and caste-system. He is the supporter of his kinsmen and friends. He is like Prajapati himself. He is the supporter of all, and the destroyer of his enemies. He always gives shelter to his devoted followers. He is deeply versed in Vedas and Vedangas. He is highly skilled in archery, and his valour is confessed by his dying foes. He has great fortitude. He is a genius, and possesses

excellent memory and is profoundly learned in all the sacred lore. He is wise, compassionate and valiant. Every one is fond of him. As the ocean is served by the rivers, he is always attended by all good men. He metes out equal treatment to his friends and enemies. This Ram is born of Kausalya's womb, and is honoured by all. In gravity, he is like the sea ; in fortitude, like the Himalyas ; in might, like Vishnu ; in beauty, like the moon ; in forbearance, like the earth ; in anger, like the doomsday fire ; in bounty, like Kuvera, the giver of wealth ; in devotion to truth, like Dharma or Religion himself."

"King Dasharath, for the satisfaction of all people, wished to invest the crown on Ram. Finding Ram about to be installed to the throne, queen Kaikeyi, who had been previously promised two boons by Dasharath, asked for the exile of Ram and the installation of her son, Bharat, to the throne. Bound by his promise, truthful Dasharath banished his dear son Ram to the forest. And Ram, for the fulfilment of his father's promise and for Kaikeyi's benefit, went in voluntary exile. Sumitra's darling, gentle Lakshman, dear to Ram, followed him out of brotherly love.

Then, exceedingly beautiful, and possessed of all auspicious signs, born of Janaka's line, the jewel of women, and who is like the embodiment of Divine grace, Ramchandra's darling wife, dearer to Ram than his life, went after her husband, as the star

Rohini follows the Moon. Dasharath himself and the citizens in great sorrow followed them to a great distance.

After some time, Ram reached the city of Sringavera on the banks of the holy Ganges, where he dismissed his charioteer Sumantra, and met Guha, the king of the Nishadas ; thence, after crossing deep rivers, Ram with Sita and Lakshman, entered the forest and came to the hermitage of Bharadwaj ; following Bharadwaja's directions, Ram arrived at the Chitrakuta mountains where he raised a beautiful hut and passed his days in joy. The Chitrakuta grew bright by the presence of the illustrious three.

When Ram left for the woods, King Dasarath died broken-hearted, bitterly lamenting the absence of Ram. After his death, Vasistha and other Brahmanas ,requested Bharat to ascend the throne, which Bharat stoutly refused. Bharat then went to forest to meet worshipful Ram. Bharat fell at the feet of Ram and entreated him to come back, saying, "Oh Aryya ! in presence of the elder brother it is not proper for the younger brother to usurp the throne. You know this custom very well, so come back and rule your kingdom." Generous Ram was pleased with Bharat's words, but he preferred to observe his father's decree and refused to return to his kingdom. He made over his sandals as his substitute at Bharat's insistence and induced him

to go back. Then, Bharat finding that all his prayers were in vain, returned to Nandigram after profoundly bowing at Ram's feet. Bharat left Ayodhya in sorrow and disgust. He placed the sandals as Ram's substitute on the throne and began to rule from Nandigram as Ram's deputy, eagerly expecting the return of Ram.

After Bharat's departure, fearing that others might intrude upon his seclusion, Ram left Chitrakuta and entered the mighty forest of Dandaka. Lotus-eyed Ram, after slaying a Rakshasa named Viradha in that forest, saw Maharshi Sharabhanga, Sutikishna, Agastya, and Agastya's brother Idhmavaha.

Then, according to Agastya's instructions, he secured the bow, sword, and the inexhaustible quiver of Indra.

While Ram was living in the Dandaka forest, ascetics and hermits came to him for the destruction of Ashuras and Rakshasas, and Ram readily agreed to their proposal.

Then, one day, he cut the ear and nose of Surpanakha, a denizen of Janasthan, who could assume different forms at will. Then the Rakshasas of the place, being incited by Surpanakha, challenged Ram Chandra in a battle, whereupon Ram slew Rakshasas, Khar, Trishira and Dushan with their men. About fourteen thousand Rakshasas were killed during his stay in Dandaka. Then Ravana, the king of the

Rakshasas; hearing of the destruction of his kinsmen, flew into rage and asked a Rakshasa called Maricha to come to his rescue. Finding Ravana about to launch into an audacious venture, Maricha entreated Ravana to desist from it, and said, "Oh king! It won't be to your benefit to enter into hostilities with mighty Ram." But Ravana, urged by fate, scorned at Maricha's words and repaired to Ram's place taking Maricha with him. Ram and Lakshman were drawn away from Sita by Maricha's wiles, and Ravan carried off Sita by force. He slew the vulture, Jatayu, that obstructed him in the way. When Ram came back, he found Jatayu slain and Sita stolen. He greatly bewailed for Sita and then set out in quest of her, after cremating Jatayu in deep sorrow. While searching for Sita, Ram came across a horrible Rakshasa called Kabandha. After slaying Kabandha, Ram burnt his body. Then Kabandha rose from the flame of the funeral pyre in the beautiful form of a Gandharva, and addressing Ram said, "Oh Ram! Go to saintly Sabari and seek her advice." Ram then went to Sabari, and according to her advice, he came to the banks of the beautiful Pompa Lake, where he met Hanuman, the Wind God's son. Acting on Hanuman's words, Ram went to Sugriva, the chief of the Vanaras or monkeys, and told him everything concerning the sad history of Sita. Hearing this tale of sorrow, Sugriva vowed friendship with Ram in the presence of sacred fire. Then on Ram's

enquiry about the cause of Sugriva's hostilities with his brother Vali, Sugriva narrated everything with a sigh. Hearing all, Ram promised to remove Sugriva's fear by killing Vali. Sugriva described the great prowess of Vali and entertained great doubts about Ram's capacity, and pointed out the huge corpse of the giant Dundhuvi slain by Vali. Ram looked at the prostrate corpse, huge as a mountain, and with a smile threw the body hundred leagues away, by a gentle push of his toe. To convince Sugriva, Ram sent a shaft which after piercing seven palms in a line and a rock, reached Rasatal or the Nether world. After witnessing these wonderful feats of strength with his own eyes, Sugriva with a contented mind accompanied Ram to Kiskindhya. After reaching Kiskindhya, Sugriva, of brownish yellow colour like that of gold, began to make terrific shouts. Hearing those shouts Vali, the lord of the monkeys, after taking Tara's permission came out and met Sugriva; when, at the insistence of Sugriva, Ram killed Vali with one deadly shaft and gave Vali's kingdom to Sugriva. Then grateful Sugriva summoned the monkeys and sent them in various directions in search of Janaka's daughter.

Then Hanuman, at the advice of bird Sampati, crossed hundred leagues of the saltish sea and arrived at Lanka, the well guarded city of Ravana. There he found Sita in the Asoka forest, pensive and sad. Hanuman then delivered Ram's message, and showed

her a token from Ram. He told her all about the newly-made friendship between Ram and Sugriva and cheered up hapless Sita with messages of hope. He then smashed down the gate of the forest. Hanuman then slew five captains, seven counsellors' sons, and Ravana's son, Aksha. He was then bound by Meghnad. Knowing that he would be soon set free by the boon of Brahma, the grandsire of all created things, he suffered himself to be carried in Ravana's presence. He then set fire to the whole of Lanka, excluding the Asoka forest, and afterwards came back from Lanka.

Then mighty Hanuman appeared before Ram and after going round him as a mark of profound respect, said, "My Lord, I have truly seen Janaki." Hearing this from Hanuman's lips, Ram followed by Sugriva repaired to the sea shore and smote the Ocean with keen shafts, bright as the Sun's rays. Then the god of the Ocean quickly appeared before Ram, and according to the Ocean's advice, with the help of Nala, Ram built a bridge over the sea.

By that bridge Ram went to Lanka, slew Ravana and recovered Sita. But thinking of Sita's long confinement in Ravana's place, Ram was stung with shame, and he used some harsh expressions towards Sita in the presence of all. Then chaste Sita, being unable to bear the insult any more, cast herself into fire. Thereupon god Agni appeared with Sita and assured Ram about Sita's stainless character. There-

upon Ram trembling with joy embraced his wife. Then the gods showered praises and blessings on Ram for his mighty deeds.

Ram then installed the best of the Rakshasas, Bibhisan, on the throne and revived his fallen monkey-soldiers by a divine boon. After this, Ram and Sita surrounded by friends and followers set out for Ayodhya in the heavenly chariot called Puspaka through the clouds. On reaching the hermitage of Bharadwaj, Ram sent Hanuman to Bharat, and accompanied by Sugriva Ram then started for Nandigram in the Puspaka. Arriving at Nandigram, Ram met his loyal brother and cut down his matted locks. Thus after regainnig Sita, Ram got back his own kingdom. Thus, Dasharath's son, noble Ram now rules over his people who have grown happy and prosperous in his reign. During his reign his subjects will not suffer from any disease or mental disquietitude. They will have no fear of hunger or of thieves. Cities and villages will be full of corns and wealth, and the people will live as happily as in the Golden Age. No fire or flood will devastate the land, and women will ever continue to be chaste and they will not suffer from widowhood. He will perform hundred horse sacrifices, give away millions of cows and immense wealth to the famous Brahmanas. He will make each of the four castes stick to its own duties. Hundreds of royal families will spring from him.

Having reigned for ten thousand and ten hundred years he will repair to the Brahmaloka or the high Heaven.

Whoever will read this noble tale of Ram's deeds, sacred as the Vedas, will be free from all sins and will attain heavenly bliss with his kins. If a Brahman reads it, he will attain excellence in speech, if a Kshattriya does it, he will lord over all, if a Vaishya reads it, he will get abundance of wealth in trade, and a Sudra will attain greatness by listening to the tale.

CHAPTER II.

THE BIRTH OF POETRY.

Having heard with admiration the words of Divine Narada, pious Valmiki with his pupils made due obeisance to him. Being thus honoured by Valmiki, Narada, after the expression of good wishes and with the former's leave, left for the heavenly regions.

Then, after a short stay in the hermitage, Valmiki came to the banks of the Tamasa, not far from the Gangetic stream. On arriving there and finding the bank of the river free from mud, Valmiki addressing his pupil Bharadwaj, standing by his side, said, "Look Bharadwaj! How beautiful is this spot, free from all stains of dirt. Its glassy stream is transparent like the hearts of pious men. Now, put down your pitcher and give me my bark. I shall bathe in this sacred stream."

Obedient Bharadwaj, thus being asked, presented the bark without delay. After taking the bark from his pupil's hand, Valmiki strayed about surveying the deep, extensive forest.

At the skirts of the forest, Valmiki saw a pair of healthy Kraunchas dallying in amorous sports and singing in melodious notes. At this moment,

suddenly a wicked fowler appeared and killed the male bird, without any provocation whatsoever. Then, the hen finding its mate thus slain and rolling in the dust, besmeared with blood, raised piteous cries of despair at the prospect of her separation from her copper-crested, amorous companion of fluttering wings. Seeing the bird thus brought down in the very act of love, Valmiki was overwhelmed with grief. His heart melted at the piteous notes of the female bird and considering it to be a highly unrighteous act, his indignation broke forth :—

"O Fowler ! Since Thou hast slain one of the pair of Kraunchas while engaged in love, thou shalt never attain any fame."

Having uttered this curse, Valmiki was struck with wonder, and repeatedly asked to himself, "What have I just now uttered being afflicted with grief for the bird ?"

Then, addressing Bharadwaj, the sage said, "These words I have just now uttered are of equal feet and of even measure, and are capable of being sung in accompaniment of a stringed lyre. And since it is born of my Shoka (grief) let it be known as a Sloka (or Verse)." When the great sage had thus spoken, his pupil Bharadwaj gladly agreed to his master's words, and Valmiki felt gratified within.

Then, Valmiki after bathing in the Tamasa and performing ablutions in the stream, returned to his

hermitage pondering all the way over the incidents of the Verse, and his disciple Bharadwaj followed him with a pitcher brimming with water.

Having reached the hermitage Valmiki took his seat and revolved in his mind all things about the verses (which came so spontaneously to his lips).

Then the four-faced God, glorious Brahma, the Creator of Heavens and Earth, appeared before Valmiki. As soon as the holy saint saw Brahma before him, he rose from his seat in reverence and stood before him with folded hands and bent head in profound obeisance. Valmiki offered the God water to wash his feet and other things of reception. After taking his seat, the Holy one enquired after Valmiki's welfare, and asked him to resume his seat. Valmiki then took his seat before the Sire of all created things, but his mind still revolved over the incidents of the Sloka. Valmiki thought about the sad fate of the bird, and while thus absorbed in thought, he quite automatically repeated the Verse in grief, "O wicked fowler! Thou shalt never attain fame for killing the tuneful Krauncha while dallying in amorous sports."

Then Brahma spoke in joy, "O thou best of the hermits, see thou hast unconsciously made a Verse, It was done at my instance. Now, the work should no longer be delayed. Those Verses of yours will be immortal, and I ask you, Oh thou Best of the Saints, to celebrate the life of Ram in your Verse.

Relate the sacred story as you have heard it from Narad about pious and intelligent Ram, Lakshman and Vaidehi and about the Rakshashas, including all that is hitherto known or unknown. Even what has been omitted by Narad, will come to your pen at the time of writing, and no words of yours should contain any untruth. So long as the mountains and the seas exist on earth, the sacred history of Ramayan shall endure, and you will enjoy a double life both in Heaven and on Earth."

Having said this, the worshipful Brahma dis appeared, and Valmiki's pupils began to chant the Verse, and the more they sang the more they wonder grew.

The great sage Valmiki, then in hundreds of melodious Verses, composed the story of the glorious deeds of Ram in pregnant meters. It behoves every one to hear the sacred lay about Ram's life and the destruction of Ravan.

CHAPTER III.

THE GREAT THEME.

The great sage Valmiki having heard the sacred story of Ram from celestial Narada, wanted to get an insight into its true history. He then sat on a bed of grass facing the east and after making due ablutions with water and concentrating his mind in yoga, he plunged himself deep into the subject. Then, through his yoga, everything became distinct to his mental eyes. He distinctly saw Ram, Lakshman, Sita, and Dasharath with his queens and counsellors talking, laughing and acting before him, as if in real life. He could then see them as clearly as he could see a myrobalan in his palm. He saw what hardships and sufferings Ram, Lakshman and Sita underwent in their wanderings through the forests. Having thus learnt everything by yoga, the great Valmiki began to compose his enchanting lay of Ram, formerly told by Narada, which is pleasing to all men's, ears, and in worth is like a sea of pearls.

Valmiki then repeated the story over again, e.g. Ram's birth ; his prowess ; his generosity ; his forbearance ; his truthfulness ; his fortitude ; his goodness and his popularity ; Ram's talks with the great

sage Visvamitra ; the formidable bow ; his marriage with Janaki ; his encounter with Parashuram ; his installation to the throne ; Kaikeyi's malice ; Ram's exile , Dasharath's grief, and sorrow of the people. Ram's meeting with Guha ; his interview with Bharadwaj ; his arrival at the Chitrakuta, Bharat's entreaties ; Ram's offering of oblations to his departed father; giving of the sandals; Bharat's removal to Nandigram ; Ram's entry into the Dandaka forest ; destruction of Viradha ; his interview with Sharabhanga and Sutikshna ; Sita's campanionship with Anusuya ; Ram's meeting with Agastya ; his obtaining arms from Indra ; Surpanakha's disfigurement ; destruction of Khara and Trisira ; death of Maricha ; carrying away of Sita ; Ram's lamentations ; the sight of the Pampa lake ; his interview with Savari, his meeting with Hanuman ; friendship with Sugriva ; destruction of Vali ; installation of Sugriva ; Tara's grief ; collection of troops ; the despatch of envoys ; Hanuman's meeting with Sampati, Hanuman's crossing the sea ; his sight of Lanka ; his entry by night ; his sight of Ravana's palace and of Ravana ; Hanuman's interview with Sita in the Asoka forest ; presentation of Ram's ring to Sita ; Sita's handing a gem to Ram through Hanuman ; Hanuman's fight and burning of Lanka ; Hanuman's return, his consolation to Ram ; Ram's interview with the ocean-god ; construction of the bridge across the sea, siege of Lanka ; Ram's friend-

ship with Bibhishan; death of Kumbhukarna, Meghnad and Ravan and recovery of Sita; ordeal of Sita; Ram's return to Ayodhya in Puspaka; meeting with Bharadwaj; despatch of Hanuman to Bharat; meeting with Bharat; Ram's installation to the throne; dismissal of the forces; Ram's rule; his administration and renunciation of Sita, and everything else that happened in Ram's life has been treated by the revered sage.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SONG.

When Ram got back his kingdom Valmiki composed a wonderful poem consisting of twenty-four thousand slokas. Having composed the poem, Valmiki thought of the means of communicating it to the world. When he was thinking about the means of its publication on earth, came in Kusa and Lava, two royal princes, dressed in hermit's dress and touched his feet. Valmiki, seeing those two brothers pure in character, endowed with sweet voice and good memory and capable of appreciating Poetry, taught them to interpret the Vedas, and along with it the whole of Ramayan dealing with the destruction of Ravan and of Sita's life in full.

The two brothers were beautiful like Gandharvas and were exceedingly sweet-voiced. They mastered all the notes of music. They looked like Ram, as his twin shadows. Then the two brothers, Kusa and Lava, learnt by rote the entire song of Ramayan with all the involutions of tone, melody, measure and time, suggesting various emotions; as, pity, anger, heroism, love, and sorrow. One day, Kusa and Lava bearing all auspicious marks on their beautiful persons, began to chant the great song in an assembly

of pure-minded hermits, and when they heard the song, the pious ascetics were siezed with delightful surprise and began to bless the boys again and again. Some in their admiration for Kusa and Lava, said, "O, how sweet is the music! how charming is the verse! All the exploits of Ram happened long, long ago, but they seem to be reacted before our eyes."

Then to the delight and admiration of the assembly, Kusa and Lava began to sing in seven-fold notes of music, and the ascetics became loud in their praises as they heard the song. Then, some one in ecstasy stood up and presented to Kusa and Lava a pitcher; some one in delight gave them a bark; another, a dark deer-skin; some presented sacred threads; some, Kamandulu; some, a twisted manju, ; some, the seat of an ascetic; some, a loin-cloth. One gave them an axe; one, a piece of red cloth; one, a rope to tie their matted locks; another, a rope for tying faggots; some, sacrificial vessel; some, hermit's stool made of fig-tree; and some one cried in joy, "May you live long." Thus blessed the truthful ascetics, and then they said in a body, "Wonderful is the story that has been composed by Valmiki; it will be a source of inspiration to all later poets, and you have beautifully sung the thing, pleasing both to the ear and to the heart, conferring longevity and prosperity to the hearers."

Thus Kusa and Lava gained reputation and praise everywhere by their songs and musical performance.

On one occasion, these sweet singers were seen by Ram in a street of Ayodhya. Ram then brought them by sending his men. When they came, Ram was seated on a throne of gold. His brothers stood by him; counsellors and other retinue surrounded the king. Beholding the ministrels, Ram said to Lakshman:

"Come, listen to the story composed in excellent measure, and fraught with lofty thoughts and deep melody."

Then the singers began to sing in clear melodious strain, raising their sweet voices to high pitch, rivalling the notes of Vina. And that song of theirs moved the assembly into ecstasy. Then high-souled Ram remarked, "These ministrels, though look like ascetics, yet they bear on their persons the signs of royalty, and the song relates to my deeds which will perpetuate my history for ever."

N. B. Our method of abbreviation will be apparent, as for instance, instead of translating 'Bharat's elder brother' we have written simply Ram and omitted repeating the adjective destroyer of foes from Ram.

CHAPTER V.

AYODHYA.

The Ramayan treats of the history of the victorious sons of Ikhswaku who ruled through countless years from the days of Manu.

In this line, King Sagara was born who dug the sea and whom sixty thousand proud sons followed in march.

We two shall recite the noble song at length, Now listen to the story with delight.

On the banks of the Saraju lies extended the great kingdom of Kosala, rich in corns and gold, where the people pass their days in happiness and peace. And famous Ayodhya is its capital. In bygone days, the city was built by Manu, the ruler of men.

It is twelve (leagues) yojanas in length and, three in breadth. It is the fairest city on earth, and is beautified with squares and palaces. It is well-watered, its spacious roads are sprinkled with full blown flowers, and are lined with shops and stalls. Its gates stand at even distance. In one part of the city live the artizans; in one part, arms and implements are stored. It contains high terraces with flags streaming in the air, and guarded with various arms. Its ramparts are protected by deep moats and fortified with various kinds of iron

weapons. The city is thus inaccessible to all. There are gardens, theatres for females, and mango groves in the city. Merchants and traders from various countries have come to live in the city for trade.

There are seven storied houses. Elephants, horses and chariots constantly ply along its streets—a rich city beyond comparison. In every street are heard sounds of lute, drum, taber, flute, chanting of the Vedas, and ringing of archer's bow. Wise and learned Brahmans live in the city.

CHAPTER VI.

KING DASHARATH.

There, in this city once reigned king Dasharath like Indra, the ruler of Heaven, commanding all royal resources, and under his rule people were happy, virtuous and prosperous. All men and women were of excellent character. None of them was atheistical or untruthful or illiterate. No man or woman was devoid of grace. The city abounded in spirited horses from Kambhoj, Vahlika, Vanayu and Sindhu, and in huge elephants from the Vindhya mountain and the Himalayas. The Kshatriyas obeyed the Brahmans, the Vaishyas were respectful towards the Kshatriyas, and all were served by the Sudras.

CHAPTER VII.

COUNSELLORS.

King Dasharatha had two priests, saintly Vasistha, faithful to advise, and Vamdeva versed in the Vedas and sacred lore. He had other counsellors, viz, Suyajna, Javali, Kashyapa, Gautama, long-lived Markandeya, and Katyayana.

King Dasharath had eight ministers famous for their sagacity and devotion and their names were Dhrishti, Vijaya, Surashtra, Rashtravardhan, Akopa, Dharmapala· and Sumantra. Peace reigned in cities and provinces. They could keep their counsels, judge of things, were well trained in the arts of administration and polite. Surrounded by these wise counsellors, Dasharatha ruled the earth, gathering informations by means of spies, and protecting the people by his might. He never met a foe who was either his equal or superior.

CHAPTER VIII.

SUMANTRA'S ADVICE.

High souled Dasharath, having no issue, pined for the birth of a son to perpetuate his line. Once he thought in his mind, "Why do I not celebrate a horse—sacrifice for obtaining a son ?" He, then, with the advice of his counsellors decided to perform Aswamedha sacrifice and called together his spiritual guides with Vasistha at their head.

The Brahmans approved of the king's intention and said, in a body "O king, since with the object of obtaining an offspring thou hast decided so nobly, you will surely get sons after your mind."

Then the king replied, "Do (then) procure the necessary sacrificial articles, according to the instructions of my spiritual preceptors, and let loose a horse guarded by a competent person, and one of the chief family priests prepare the sacrificial ground on the north bank of the Saraju. The ceremony can not be celebrated by every king. Particular care should be taken that it may not be defective on account of any omission. The Brahmins then embraced the monarch and retired with his permission Hearing all about the sacrifice, the King's charioteer Sumantra said, "Listen, Sire, to a story of old which I have myself heard. The Saint Sanat Kumar foretold how in your ancient line a son would be

born. The seer said, "Kashyapa has a son named Vibhandhaka, and he will get a son called Rishyasringa. He will be brought up with wood-land deer and will pass his days in the woods, and will know nothing except following the behests of his father. It is said, Oh King, that he will practise two modes of Brahmacharya and spend some time by the sacrificial fire. By this time, a King called Lomapada will sit on the throne of Angas. But for the King's sin, plague and drought will visit the land and the King will ask the priests to find out some remedy for it. The Brahmans then will advise him to bring Vibhandhaka's son by any means and to bestow his daughter Santa with due honours on him. Hearing this, the King will ask his priests and courtezans to bring Rishyasringa to him. But they will beg to be excused from fear of Vibhandhaka. Then they will devise many crafty plots. Then it will be planned that young damsels expert in all sorts of blandishments, will be sent attired in hermit's dress to beguile the holy hermit with amorous wiles; and the unsuspecting youth seduced by them will leave his father's cottage. Then when Rishyasringa will leave his peaceful retreat and come to the city the troubles of the King will come to an end, and Rishyasringa will be married to Santa. Now I have related what Sanat Kumar had communicated before."

King Dasarath then exclaimed in joy, "Tell me how they brought the holy hermit to Angas?

CHAPTER IX.

RISHYASRINGA.

Thus asked by the King, Sumantra replied, "The priests said to Lompada, "Rishyasringa has been brought up in the woods and is engaged in religious austerities and is quiet ignorant of woman and sensual pleasures. Let, therefore, most beautiful girls be sent to him and they will seduce him hither."

Then the courtiers acted according to the instructions of the priests and sent fascinating courtezans to the forest, and they stopped at some distance from the hermitage.

It happened, however, that one day, Bibhandaka's son, who never strayed from his father's retreat, while strolling about leisurely came to that spot and beheld those young beauties.

Then, to allure the youthful hermit, the bright young girls with their scented tresses tied with floral wreaths, began to sing and dance and feigned all amorous things. The whole forest became reverberated with their music, anklets' silvery chime, and sweet cuckoo's notes.

Rishyasringa gazed on them in wild surprise, and he felt a hitherto unfelt strong impulse in him. They marked his amazed look and the girls came near to him and said,

"Whose son art thou? Why do you live alone in this wood? We are eager to know the truth."

The young ascetic's eyes gloated upon their lovely forms. A strange longing rose in his mind and he replied,

"My father is holy Kasyapa's son, Vibhandhaka, and I am called Rishyasringa. Our hermitage is close by. Please come to our cottage; I welcome you, gentle beauties."

They then gladly went to his cottage and Rishyasringa received them most warmly. He gave them water to wash their feet, and offered them fruits and roots to eat.

The damsels then broke forth with a merry laugh, "We too have dainty fruits in store. Please taste the produce of our forest".

Then they gave him many luscious things, looking like fruits. Then the laughing damsels threw their arms round his neck, and whispered to his ears heavy tales of love, while their sumptuous breasts and delicate limbs pressed against the youthful hermit.

Then the wily girls took a hasty leave, saying that they were afraid of his ascetic father. When they were gone Rishyasringa felt distressed by their absence. He seemed to be possessed by a longing love, and roamed about the forest in restless steps. And the next day, Rishyasringa eagerly came to the spot where he had encountered the beautiful girls previously. As soon as those wily girls saw

Vibhandaka's son, they came forward and said, "O Brahman ! Come to our cottage, there are various fruits and roots which you will have to your heart's content."

Rishyasringa felt tempted and he was thus vanquished, brought over by the wily women. As soon as Rishyasring was, brought Indra poured forth plenty of showers enlivening the earth and the spirits of men. The King received him with due honours and conferred on him his daughter Santa. Thus honoured by the King, Rishyasringa passed his days in the city with his beloved wife Santa.

CHAPTER X.

THE INVITATION.

"Listen, O foremost of monarchs, I shall tell what Sanat Kumar, the best of gods, has said." Thus resumed Sumantra. "In Ikshaku's line there will be born a pious king named Dasharath, beautiful in appearance and true to his vows. He will be a friend of the King of Angas who will have a virtuous daughter named Santa. At one time, the famous King Dasharath will repair to him and thus speak to him, 'O noble one! I am without any issue and I wish to perform a sacrifice for it. Let Santa's husband take charge of that sacrifice. Please request him for it."

Hearing this, Lompada, after thinking over the matter, will make over Rishyasringa with his wife and children for the intended ceremony. After bringing Rishyasringa, King Dasarath, glad at heart, will make preparations for the sacrifice and with supplicating prayer will invite the best of Brahmans to conduct the ceremony. And from that Putreshti sacrifice four sons of great prowess will be born unto him."

"Thus has prophesied Sanat Kumar. Therefore, O mighty King, bring here Rishyasringa with due honours."

Dasharath was exceedingly delighted at these words of Sumantra. Dasharath then looked to Vasistha for advice, who gave his glad consent to Sumantra's words.

Then Dasharath with his queens and courtiers went to Angas where he was warmly received by his friend, Lomapada, the King of Angas. Lomapada then introduced Dasharath to Rishyasringa who hearing of the intimate friendship between the two, received the former with warm hospitality.

Dasharath stopped at Angas for seven or eight days. Then, after stating the object of his visit, addressing Lomapada, he said, "Let your daughter with her husband come to my city to help my sacrifice which I intend to perform there."

Hearing this, his friend Lomapada requested his son-in-law Rishyasringa to repair to Ayodhya with his wife, and Rishyasring readily consented to his father-in-law's proposal.

Then Dasarath and Lomapada clasped each other's palm and embraced each other in joy. After this Dasarath set out for Ayodhya with Rishyasringa, the foremost of Brahmans, and sent a messenger for a public celebration : "Let the whole city be decorated, let it be perfumed with sweet incense, let the streets be well-watered and let gay banners flutter in the air".

All the people awaited his return in eager joy, and as soon as the King entered the city with Rishya-

sringa in his company, the whole city welcomed him with the blares of conch shells and drums.

The King then took him inside his palace and accorded him due honours with rites of hospitality, In consequence of Rishyasringa's presence, the King thought that his object had been gained. And the ladies of the palace were all pleased at the sight of large-eyed Santa. Thus honoured by all, Rishyasringa and his wife passed their days.

CHAPTER XI.

ON THE EVE OF THE SACRIFICE.

After some time, when the sweet vernal season appeared, King Dasarath thought of performing his sacrifice. Dasarath then came to Rishyasringa and after bowing to the saint, he invited him to conduct the ceremony for getting sons, to perpetuate his line.

The Brahman said to the King, "Let it be so. Order for necessary provisions, loose the horse and prepare the sacrificial ground on the north bank of the Saraju." Thereafter, King Dasharath addressing Sumantra said, "O Sumantra, summon Brahmans and priests versed in the Vedas and Vedangas: Suyajna, Vamdeva, Javali, Kashyapa and the priest Vasistha. Thereupon, Sumantra bestirred himself and summoned all those versed in the Vedas. When they came, Dasharath after showing due honours to them said,

"Having no son I have no happiness in life, hence I intend to perform an Aswamedha sacrifice, and by the blessings of holy Rishyasringa, I am sure, I shall gain my object." The Brahmans fully agreed to his words. The King was greatly delighted at their approval and he cheerfully

asked his men to make preparations for the sacrifice in accordance with direction of the Brahmans. Then, the Brahmans blessed him saying, 'May your desire be crowned with success."

Dasharath then bowed to them in profound respect and hurried to meet his queens. And when they heard about the possibility of sons, their lotus-like faces brightened in joy, as lilies at the end of the frost.

CHAPTER XII.

THE GREAT PREPARATION.

Again when the spring appeared after a year, the king, anxious for the birth of sons, resolved to perform the sacrifice without further delay. He then addressing Vasistha said,

"O Reverend Sir, Please make all preparations strictly according to the injunctions of the Sastras. Kindly see there may not be any impediment to it. You are my best friend and guide. You will have to take entire charge of the sacrifice."

Vasistha replied, "I shall do as you desire."

Then Vasistha summoned Brahmans well versed in sacrificial things, wise, and aged people, architects, capable servants, carpenters, diggers, astrologers, artists, actors, dancers, learned and good charactered people for the sacrifice of king Dasharath. He ordered to fetch bricks by thousands and thousands, and raise a spacious structure for the accommodation of kings and princes, and to furnish it with various kinds of furnitures; then to build thousands of sheds for the Brahmans, and replenish them with food and drink. Then he directed to construct separate quarters for each one of the princes coming from distant places,

and sheds for ctizens, soldiers and foreigners, with proper accommodation for every one, and also to construct stalls for horses and elephants. "Many poor and low class people are expected to attend the sacrifice, beautiful huts should be raised for them. And whatever you may give to them you must give it with proper modesty, so that they may think themselves respectfully entortained. Don't neglect or despire any body through greed or fits of temper. Those labourers, and artizans who will remain engaged in the sacrificial work should also be treated with kindness, for those who work for wages if they receive beyond their expectations, accomplish their work satisfactorily and leave nothing unfinished or illdone. So act with discretion and kindness."

Thus Vasistha concluded. Thereupon some came forward and said, "we have done everything according to your instructions, and nothing has been omitted, and what you now say will be carried out to the letters."

Then, Vasistha summoning Sumantra said, "Go and invite all the great rulers, and the Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and the Sudras. Invite cordially the people of all provinces. Go yourself to Janaka, the truthful and valiant king of Mithila. As he is a very old ally of ours I have first mentioned his name. Then go to amiable Keshiraj, a man of character and of great virtues. Then bring with all honour the king's

father-in-law, the pious ruler of Kekaya with his sons; the king's friend, Lompada, the chief of Angas; the puissant ruler of Kosala; and the highly accomplished and martial king of Maghada. According to the wishes of Dasharath also invite the rulers of the East, the Kings of Sindhu, Sauvira and Saurasthra. Summon all the rulers who are friendly to us, to attend the sacrifice with their retinues. You now send envoys to them according to the instructions of the king."

Then Sumantra in obedience to Vasistha's words, sent faithful emissaries to different rulers, and himself went to invite some of them.

After this, some men engaged in the sacrificial work, came and informed Vasistha that they had got everything ready for the sacrifice. At this, saintly Vasistha was greatly pleased and said unto them, "I charge you, not to give anything disrespectfully to any body. Anything given in scorn or disrespect destroys the giver as sin."

Then, after two or three days, the invited Kings and princes began to pour in, with gems and other rich presents to King Dasharath.

Priest Vasistha then informed the King of the arrival of the princes, all of whom were respectfully received. Every thing was carefully arranged for the sacrifice, and the whole place seemed to be filled with all desirable objects.

Then, according to the words of both Vasistha and

Rrishyasringa, Dasharath, one day, under an auspicious star repaired to thc sacrificial ground. Thereupon, Vasistha and other Brahmans with Rishyasringa at their head, began the great sacrifice, and the King with his queens was intiated into it.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SACRIFICE.

After a year when the wandering, sacrificial horse returned, commenced the Aswamedha Sacrifice on the northern bank of the Saraju, and Rishyasriga guided its operations. All the priests duly performed their assigned parts, and after the observance of necessary Pravargya* and Upasads† rites. Then all the duties were worshipped ; first of all oblations were offered to Indra. Rishyasringa and other learned Brahmins began to invoke Indra and other Gods by chanting sacred Mantras of the Vedas. Then with sweet Sama hymns.‡ each deity was given his due portion of the sacrifice. Then midday ablutions took place according to Sastric rites, and the priests officiated at the third-time bath of the King.

On that day no Brahmins ever felt tired, and all persons gathered there, the Brahmans, the Sudras, ascetics. monks, women, children old and invalid people were sumptuously fed. Profuse food and drink was supplied to every body. The Brahmans after

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* This ceremony preceded a great sacrifice without which none was allowed to take part in the latter.

† Upasads—a ceremony of burnt offerings. A vedic ceremony.

eating to their heart's content, after praising their preparations, said, "we have been fully gratified, may all good attend upon you."

Everday learned Brahmans performed the operations of the sacrifice according to the rules of the Sastras.

When time came for rearing the sacrificial posts or Yupas, men versed in sacrificial rites prepared six posts of Bilva, six of Khadir (mimiosa catechu), six of Palas (Butea frondosa) and one of Sleshmat (Cardia Latifolia) and two wide posts of Devadaru (pine). These twenty one posts,each 21 cubits or Aratnis long, having eight angles and decked in twenty one pieces of cloth were firmly planted by the artizans. Being wrapped up in cloths and decked with flowers they looked like the Seven Rishis* of the heavens.

The Brahmins constructed the sacrificial fire-place with bricks, and that fire place consisting on three sides of eighteen bricks looked like golden winged Gudada ; and for the purpose of sacrifice, horses, beasts, birds, reptiles, and aquatic animals were collected. To those Yupas or posts were tied hundreds of animals as well as the horse of the King. Then Kausalya after performing the prelimimary rites with a cheerful heart, slew the King's horse with three strokes. Then with the object of obtaining a son and religions merit, she with pure and calm mind

* The constellation of Ursa Major.

passed one night by the side of that dead, winged horse from evening till the break of the day. Then the priest led other queens, Mahishis* Vavatas†, and parivritis to touch the horse attended by Kausalya. Then Rrishyasringa made sacrifice with the marrow of the horse according to the sacred rules, and King Dasharath for expatiation of his sins, smelt the odour arising out of the fat cast into fire. Then sixteen Rithvik priests offered the severed limbs of the horse into sacrificial fire. The horse-sacrifice according to Kalpa Sutras and Brahmans extend to three days. First day's ceremony is called Agnistome, second day's is named Uktha and the third day's sacrifice is called Atiratra. Then the ceremonies of Jyotishtoma, Ayustoma, Abhijat, Atiratra, Viswajit, Aptoryama, were performed with due rites.

In this great horse sacrifice founded by Sayambhu, Dasharath gave his Eastern region to the chief sacrificial priests, the Western province to Adwaryu, the Southern to Brahma and the Northern to Udgath.

The Brahmans were greatly delighted and spoke in a body, "You are alone worthy to protect the earth, we do not want any land, our days are passed in meditation and in the study of Vedas, give us something else."

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* of Kshatriya caste.

† Vavatas of Vaishya caste and Parivritis of Sudra castes.

Then the chief of the Ikshwaku line gave them ten lakhs of kine, ten Kotis of gold and forty of silver. They then brought those things to Vasistha and Rishyasringa, at which they were greatly pleased. Then, king Dasharath said to Rishyasringa.

"Please, bless me with the perpetuation of my line."

Then the best of the Brahmins replied, "O king four sons will be born to you to perpetuate your line."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PROPHESY.

Dasarath again said, "O holy saint, please devise some means that my race may not be extinct."

Then intelligent Rishyasringa, learned in the Vedas, said, "for your son I shall perform the famous Putresthi sacrifice according to the Mantras as laid down in the Atharva Veda. This will blass you with offspring."

Then Rishyasringa began the sacriffce according to the directions of the Kalpa Sutra. All the deities, the Gandharvas, Siddhas and other great saints appeared in person to take their due shares of the offered up oblations.

When the Putresthi sacrifice began the gods appeared before Brahma and said, "O Lord! A Rakshasa named Ravan grown mighty by your boon, oppresses us all and we can not resist him by any means. You were pleased to confer on him the boon, and we all suffer for it. This wicked minded one is tyrannising over the three worlds and is envious of others' prosperity. Blinded by power and by your boon, he is now thinking of conquering Indra, the king of gods, and is continually harassing the saints, the Yakshas, the Gandharvas, the

Brahmans and the Asuras. The Sun does not dare to scorch him with his rays, nor the Wind ventures to blow roughly about him; even the billowy ocean does not dare to stir in his presence. We have bacome greatly afraid of that horrible Ravan. Please now devise some means for the destruction of the wicked one."

Then the lotus—born Brahma after some thought replied, "O god! I have found out the means of his destruction. At the time of asking the boon from me, he asked thrt he might not be slain by any god, Gandharva, Yaksha and Raksha. And I agreed to it but in disdain he did not mention the name of Man.

He may, therefore, be slain by a man. I do not see any other means of his death.

The gods were greatly delighted hearing these words from Brahma's lips.

At this moment, effulgent Vishnu, lord of the universe, clad in yellow robes, wearing bracelets of shining gold and holding in his hands shell, discus, mace and lotus came there riding on his Eagle, as the sun rides upon the cloud, and was welcomed by the gods with hymns of praise. After he took his seat beside Brahma, the gods spoke to him.

"O Vishnu be thou our shelter." Then Vishnu said, "Tell me how I may grant your prayer."

The gods said, "Dasharath, the generous and powarful ruler of Ayodhya has three queens like

Beauty, Modesty and Fame, but he is ever pining for sons. Divide yourself into four and be his sons by those three queens, Be incarnate as man on earth and slay in battle Ravan, the scourge of the world and invincible by the gods. In haughtiness of power, he is tyrannising over saints and denizens of the heaven. It is for this we have come to you. You are our only refuge."

Then Vishnu, the adored lord of all, assured them saying, "Banish all fear. For your good I shall destroy formidable Ravan with all his race, and shall rule over the earth for eleven thousand years,"

The gods then sang hymns of Vishnu. After this, lotus-eyed Vishnu agreed to divide himself into four and take his birth in Dasarath's house,

The gods then said, "Come back to heaven after destroying insolent Ravan, the enemy of Indra, and the scourge of the world."

CHAPTER XV,

HEAVENLY PAYASA.

Then Narayan who himself knew the means of Ravan's destruction asked the gods in what way he could destroy him. The gods said, "formerly this dreadful Ravana practised great austerities and penance and thereby received boon from Brahma, the progenitor of the world, that none would be able to destroy him; but while asking for the boon he did not mention the name of man. So assume the form of man and kill Ravan who now commits ravages upon the heaven and carries away women by force."

Vishnu then agreed to accept Dasarath as his father.

At that time, king Dasarath was eagerly watching the performance of the sacrifice.

Then, from the sacrificial flame rose a huge dark figure with red eyes and clad in red, effulgent as the sun, and holding in his both hands a large golden cup with a silver cover containing celestial Payasa* within. His voice was deep like the rattle of a drum, his body was covered with hairs like that

* Rice or grains boiled with sugar and milk, akin to porridge.

of a lion, the face covered with profuse beard and whiskers, he had glossy locks. His body was adorned with divine ornaments and he had many auspicious marks on him. He was tall like a mountain peak, and dread-ful like fire.

That supernatural person in tiger like haughty steps rose out of the flame, and casting his eyes on Dasarath said, "O King, know me as being sent by Prajapati."

Dasarath in folded hands replied "Tell me what I can do for you ?"

Then that person commissioned by Prajapati said, "O King you have got heavenly Payasa by worshipping the gods. Give this healthy and pro-creating Payasa prepared by Prajapati to your wives and you will obtain your desired object through your wives, for which you are performing the sacrifice."

King Dasarath then in cheerful mind took the golden vessel from his hand, and was immensely delighted at receiving the Payasa, as a poor man feels on the receipt of wealth. Then the King greeted him and went round him in joy. Then the divine person, errand being over again vanished in the flames.

As the sky appears beautiful by the rays of the autumnal moon, Dasarath's palace shone with the bright and cheerful faces of the royal dames.

Then entering the seraglio Dasarath said to

Kausalya "O Dear! take this nectar like Payasa and you will obtain son,"

Saying this Dasarath gave her half of the Payasa and then, at the request of the king, Kausalya gave half of that to Sumitra. Dasaratha then gave the remaining half to Kaikeyi and requested her to give half of it to Sumitra. Thus Dasarath distributed the nectar-like Payasa amongst his queens, and they were greatly delighted at this.

Shortly after, his queens grew heavy with child, and Dasarath became elated like Indra adored by gods and saints.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE VANARAS.

After Vishnu took his birth, Sayambhu, the self-existent Lord of all, addressing the Gods, said, "To help our well-wisher, Vishnu, do you create powerful creatures capable of assuming different forms at will. All those helping beings must be heroic, quick as the wind, intelligent, versed in laws and in the arts of war and peace, possessing excellent bodies, and they must be invincible and indestructible like the immortals. Produce from Apsaris, Gandharvis, celestial dames, and female monkeys a powerful progeny of apes or monkeys as I had created the King of bears, Jambuvana when I yawned."

Hearing these words of Sayambhu the Gods began to procreate sons in the form of monkeys. Maharshi, Sidahas, Vidyadhar, Uraga, Kimpurasha, Tarkshya Yaksha began to create monkeys.

Indra procreated Vali tall as the Mahendra's peak, the Sun, Sugriva ; Vrihaspati, Tarak, the intelligent of the apes; God Kuvera, the beautiful Gandhamadan; Viswakarma, Nala ; and Agni, Neela. Then two beautiful Gods Aswnikumar produced Mainda and Dividik ; Varun, Sushena ; Parjanya, Sarava ; and Wind God, Hanuman, hard as the thunderbolt and

quick as the eagle. Thus the powerful monkeys were created. These monkeys were endowed with great strength like lions and daring like tigers and could go wherever they wished. They fought by hurling huge stones and with their teeth and nails, and were accomplished in the use of all weapons. They could move hills, crush forests and stir up the sea. Thus millions of powerful Vanaras came into existence. Some of these monkeys came to live in the summit of the Rikshavana hills. Some of these monkeys took Vali as their leader ; Some, Sugriva, some Nala, some Neela and some Hanuman. And the mighty Vali protected Valluk and the Go-langula races of monkeys. Thus for the help of Ram a powerful brood of monkeys were created.

CHAPTER XVII.

BIRTH OF RAM,

After the Aswamedha sacrifice was over the Gods and the invited guests repaired to their respective places. Then the great saint Rishyasringa having been duly honoured by the King, left Ayodhya with his devoted wife Santa who was dearer to her lord than Paulomi to Indra. The King himself with his retinue escorted the great sage to a great distance when Rishyasringa asked the King to retire, at which Dasarath returned with tearful eyes.

Then after the expiry of the six seasons and on the completion of the twelfth month, on the ninth lunar day of the month of Chaitra, under the star Punarvasu, with the Sun, Mars, Saturn, Jupiter and Venus at Aries, Capricorn, Libra, Cancer and Pisces; and when the Moon with the Jupiter entered Cancer of the Zodiac, Kausalya gave birth to great and prosperous Ram with mighty arms, rosy eyes and scarlet lips the joy of Dasarth and the adored of all people. He bore all auspicious marks on his fair body. Then Queen Kausalya looked like Aditi, the mother of the gods, with Purandar in her lap. Kaikeyi then gave birth to truthful Bharat—the fourth part of Vishnu. Then Sumitra delivered twin sons. Bharat was born

under the Star Pushya, when the Sun entered Pisces and the two sons of Sumitra were born under the Star Aslesha when the sun rose in the cancer.

Thus four sons of Dasarath were born. They were beautiful like the stars of the heaven as Proshthapad's four-fold light. At their birth, the Gandharvas began to sing and Apsaras danced in joy, kettledrums were played in the heaven, and clouds showered flowers on earth. High festivties were held by the people of Ayodhya, and its highways became crowded with the citizens and musicians and dancers gave proofs of their skill to the public; and the King gave liberally to all—bards, astrologers and others and thousands of kine to the Brahmans.

At the expiry of the eleventh day the King performed the naming ceremony of his sons, and Vasistha in great delight conferred the names. The eldest one was called Ram, Kaikeyi's son was named Bharat and Sumitra's first son was named Lakshman and the last of the twin born was called Satrughna. The King fed the Brahmans, and all rural and urban people sumptuously and gave gold and jewels to the Brahmans.

Of the princes, eldest Ram was the delight of his father and the object of general regard. All of them were heroic, virtuous, educated and versed in the Vedas. Most puissant Ram of spotless character, like the full Moon, was the delight of all eyes. He was an expert rider, an adept in managing

chariot and could ride elephants. He was a master bowman, and was ever engaged in the study of arms, and in ministering to his father's wishes.

Auspicious Lakshman was deeply attached to Ram even from his early infancy. He was always attentive to the wishes of Ram, He never ate anything unless Ram partook it first. He could not even sleep without Ram's company. When Ram went on hunting Lakshman always followed him with bow in his hand. Lakshman's younger brother Satrughna was likewise devoted to Bharat and was dearer to the latter than life.

Like Brahma, the lord of all created beings, Dasarath felt exceedingly happy on account of his four glorious sons.

CHAPTER XVIII.

VISVAMITRA'S ARRIVAL.

On the attainment of the youth of his sons, King Dasarath thought about the marriage of his boys. When Dasarath was thinking about the nuptials of his sons, came in the great sage Visvamitra of immortal fame.

Desiring to see the King, Visvamitra said to the warders, "Go, and inform the King that Gadhi's son is come."

At this, the warders ran to the Royal chamber and informed the king about the arrival of the saint.

As soon as Dasarath heard of this, he with his priests hastened to meet the ascetic, as Indra goes to meet Vrihaspati, * the heavenly priest, and offered him Arghya.† Having accepted the Arghya, Saintly Visvamitra enquired about the welfare of the kingdom, about the royal exchequer, cities, provinces and the Royal family. Visvamitra then asked.

"Are the subordinate princes obedient to you? Are your enemies vanquished?

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* In one reading there is Brahma, in another, it is not Indra but Vasava.

† Mark of hospitality and honour.

"Are all the duties to man and gods being properly discharged ?"

He then enquired about the welfare of Vasistha and other saints.

When Visvamitra was seated, King Dasarath most respectfully said,

"O great saint, you are welcome like nectar itself, like rains after drought, like the birth of a son to an issueless man, like the recovery of a lost thing, like joy at the time of great festivity. Have your journey been safe ? May I know your wishes ? It is my good luck that you have come to my house. Formerly by great austerities you first attained the status of a Rajarshi* then that of Brahmarshi.† I have been really sanctified by your presence. Pray tell me the object of your visit, so that I may gladly do your biddings. You should not feel any hesitation. Surely great merit will accrue to me by your auspicious presence."

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* A royal saint. † A Brahmin saint.

CHAPTER XIX.

VISVAMITRA'S SPEECH.

Hearing these words of Dasarath, Visvamitra, with hairs standing on their ends in joy, cheerfully said,

"O King, you are born in a great and illustrious line, saintly Vasistha is your counsellor. These words become you alone on earth. Now I shall tell you the object of my coming. O King, recently I have begun a sacrifice. But before it has been completed two formidable Rakshasas called Maricha and Subahu, who can assume any form at will, have impeded the sacrifice by throwing flesh and blood on the sacrificial altar. Having seen the rites thus disturbed I have left the place in despair. All my labours have been in vain.

"At the time of sacrifice it is not proper to curse any body so I could not give vent to my wrath against those Rakshasas. O King, therefore, place your eldest son Ram in my charge. Being protected by me, he will be able to destroy those Rakshasas by his divine prowess. By my blessings he shall be famous in the three worlds. Do not fear. Marich and Subahu won't be able to stand before him. They are no match for Ram. I assure

you they will be slain by Ram. Myself, Maharshi Vasistha and others know his might. If you desire to acquire great merit and fame and if Vasistha and other counsellors agree, then place lotus-eyed Ram in my hand. I want him for my work. Ram too has passed his boyhood. So allow Ram to accompany me and to remain with me for ten nights during my sacrifice. Please see that the time of my sacrifice be not over. Don't be nervous or sad. Good will ensue to you,"

Hearing these words King Dasarath fell into a swoon as if from a great shock of sorrow.

CHAPTER XX.

DASARATH'S REPLY.

King Dasarath on regaining his consciousness sorrowfully said,

"O Saint! Ram is only about sixteen. He is not yet fit to fight with the Rakshasas. I am master of millions of troops, I shall go with my army and fight with those rovers of night. I shall myself protect your sacrifice with bow in my hand, and shall fight with the Rakshasas till death. Ram is too young and inexperienced, he has not yet acquired proficiency in arms or in war. Moreover, the Rakshasas are very cunning fighters. So I don't think Ram is a fit match for them. Besides, O Saint, I cannot bear Ram's absence even for a moment. If it is your intention to take Ram then please also take me with my forces along with him. O Kusik's son, I am nine thousand years old, I have obtained Ram after great woe. Of the four sons, eldest Ram is the delight of my heart. So please do not take him. Besides who are these Rakshasas? Whose sons are they? Who helps them? By what means these cunning warriors will be slain? Please tell me everything."

Maharshi Visvamitra replied, "I have heard, there is a mighty Rakshasa named Ravan born in the line of Maharshi Pulastya. Having obtained boon from Brahma, he is tyrannising over the three worlds with his Rakshasas. He is Maharshi Visrava's son and brother of Kuvera, the lord of wealth. He disdains from pride to disturb the sacrifice himself so he has commissioned Marich and Subahu for the thing. Marich and Subahu at his directions are disturbing my sacrifice.

There upon Dasarath said, "O Saint, I wont be able to fight against that wicked Ravan. It is my great misfortune. Astonishing is the prowess of Ravana, so I have heard. Not to speak of man even the Gods cannot stand his might. I can't fight against him or his forces. And whether you take my army or my sons you won't be able to stand before him. My beautiful Ram is first of tender years, secondly, he knows very little of battle. So how can I venture to send him along with you? Marich and Subahu then are the sons of Sunda and Upasunda and are frightful like death itself, so I can't allow Ram to accompany you. If you wish I may with my men go and fight against those powerful Rakshasas. If you do not agree to it, I entreat you to give up Ram."

CHAPTER XXII.

VISVAMITRA'S ANGER.

Having heard Visvamitra flew into rage and addressing the King, he angrily commenced,

"At first you promised to grant my prayer, now you are backing out. In fact, such a thing I never expected from one born in Raghu's line. For this act of impiety your dynasty will be extinct. If you want to break your words and desire the destruction of your race then tell me so and let me go to my own place and you enjoy yourself with your friends."

Even the gods became frightened at this great outburst of Visvamitra's rage. Seeing the three worlds in trepidation with fear, sage Vasistha said to Dasarath.

"Born in the famous line of Ikshwaku you should be like virtue's self. You must not deviate from duty, People know you to be righteous so keep up your promise. If you do not stick to your words your merits will come to an end. Doesn't matter whether Ram is skilled in arms or not, the Rakshasas won't be able to do any harm, since Visvamitra himself will protect him, as fire protects the heavenly Nectar. Therefore send Ram. Ram is Justice incarnate

on earth. He is the wisest and mightest of all, he is the protector of all religious penance and is skilled in weapons. But this fact is little known. And the great sage you see before you is not less mighty. Formerly when this great sage ruled over his kingdom, God Siva gave him some divine arms. They are born* of Krisaswa and of Prajapati Daksha's daughters, Jaya and Suprabha. They are of different forms. Kusika's son is quite conversant with their use.

He is a great sage, the past, present and the future are known to him. Therefore do not hesitate for a moment to send Ram with him. Visvamitra himself can destroy those Rakshas, it is for the benefit of Ram that he wants him.

Dasarath was greatly delighted at these words of Vasistha.

* Does it mean invention ?

CHAPTER XXIII.

MANTRAS.

Then Dasarath in glad heart sent for Ram and Lakshman. Kausalya and the King himself performed all the auspicious rites. Priest Vasistha began to chant auspicious mantras. Dasarath after smelling Ram's head, in cheerful mind made over him to Visvamitra.

Seeing lotus-eyed Ram following Visvamitra, gentle breeze, free from dust, began to blow softly, tambour was sounded in the sky, flowers were showered from above, and conch-shells were blown from every part of the city. Raven locked Ram and Lakshman followed the saint with bows, quivers, swords, and gloves for the protection of fingers. In fact, their beauty created a halo of glory around them.

After proceeding over half a league from Ayodhya and arriving at the right bank of the Saraju, addresing Ram, Visvamitra said in a sweet voice, "Ram, my boy, make ablutions with this water of the river. No more time should be wasted now."

I shall initiate you into the Mantras of Vala and Ativala. This will remove all fatigue or fever of a long journey and your look will not be in any

way changed. Whether you sleep or remain unguarded Rakshasas won't be able to defeat by surprise. If you practise this mantra in the form of Japa, none in the three worlds will be equal·to you in strength or intelligence.

With the help of these mantras you will be able to overcome all difficulties. You will never be troubled by hunger or thirst. These Vala and Ativala lie at the root of all knowledge ; they are the daughters of Brahma. I wish to confer them on you, since you are worthy of them. You have got virtues no doubt, yet you will be greatly benefited by these Mantras.

Then mighty Ram after due oblations received the Mantras and after receiving the Mantras Ram looked resplendent like the autumnal sun.

At the advent of night, Ram performed the duties of a pupil to Visvamitra. Then Visvamitra passed the night on the bank of Saraju. Ram and Lakshman lying on the unaccustomed bed of grass, did not feel uncomfortable on account of Visvamitra's sweet conversations.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE JOURNEY.

When the night was over, sage Visvamitra said, "My boy the night is over.

It is time for morning service. Then leave your bed."

At these words of Visvamitra, Ram and Lakshman left their pallet, took their bath and performed their Sandhya. Visvamitra then proceeded with them. In their journey, Ram and Laksman saw the confluence of Saraju with the Ganges, flowing in three paths. On the banks of which there were hermitages of the ascetics and saints who had been practising religious austerities for thousands of years. They were greatly delighted at the sight, and pointing a particular hermitage they asked. "Whose hermitage is this ? Who lives here ? We are curious to know."

Then Visvamitra answered with a smile. "Listen, to whom the hermitage belonged in the past. Whom the people call Kam, that god Ananga once lived in flesh and blood, and this asylum belonged to him. It so happened that once Siva the great Lord of

Kailash after breaking his meditatation of Samadhi* was going in company of the gods, when foolish Kam dared to disturb his mind. Thereupon, the God Rudra eyed him with anger, and the poor Kam was atonce reduced to ashes. Henceforward Kam came to be known as Ananga. Pious sages live in these hermitages, we shall pass our night at this confluence of the Ganges and the Saraju."

When Visvamitra was thus addressing Ram the ascetics of the forests became aware of their presence by Virtue of their yoga and they soon appeared before them and received them with warm hospitality and offered Arghya to Visvamitra.

At last, the day waned and they performed their evening Sandhya. Visvamitra with Ram and Lakshman retired for rest. And Visvamitra entertained the ascetics along with Ram and Lakshman by his pleasant talks.

* Samadhi—religious meditation in which the devotee remain in a trance or spiritual ecstasy, while all his senses remain dead to the impressions of the outside world.

CHAPTER XXV.

TARAKA.

On the following morning after due ablution, Visvamitra arrived at the bank of the Ganges, where the ascetics brought a fine boat and said, "With these two princes get upon the boat and cross the Ganges". Visvamitra, after showing due honour to them, with Ram and Lakshman began to cross the Ganges, flowing towards the ocean. While they were steering along the stream they heard a tremendous noise. Reaching the midstream Ram and Lakshman grew eager to ascertain the cause of that sound due to the dashing of the waves against the boat ?" Hearing this Visvamitra replied,

"O Rama there is an excellent lake in the Kailash created by Brahma. As it was created by Brahma's mind (Manasa) it is known as the Manasa Lake. The sacred Saraju that flows by Ayodhya rises from that lake and this loud sound issues from the place where it falls into the Ganges. Look how the waves of the Ganges and the Saraju break against the boat. Bow down to the sacred streams with a devout mind.

Thereafter, Rama and Lakshman landed on the right bank and proceeded along it in quick steps. In their journey Ram saw a deep, dreadful forest. He then addressing Visvamitra said, "How dense is this forest filled with humming noise of the crickets and abounding in ferocious animals. Various kinds of birds are frightfully screaming day and night. Lions, tigers, elephants wild boars are prowling about here and there. Dhava, Sal, Bignonia, Patalas, Badaris, and other kinds of trees are to be found every where. Which forest is this ?"

Visvamitra replied, "Listen, O Kakustha, to whom belongs this terrible forest. Formerly there were two flourishing cities called 'Malada' and 'Karush' built by heavenly architects. Formerly, at the time of the destruction of Vritra, Indra here incurred stain by killing a Brahmin, and here the Gods and the ascetics, soothed the king of gods with the waters of the Ganges, and Indra being pleased conferred a boon, in consequence of which these two places attained great prosperity afterwards.

Then after a lapse of time a Yakshini was born who could assume different forms at will. Her name is Taraka. She was the wife of Sanda. She devasted these two localities. She possesses the strength of thousand elephants. Her son is called Maricha. She has a capacious mouth and strong arms. Taraka is the terror of men. She is now about half a yoyan away. We shall have to pass through

that forest, and we rely upon the strength of your arms. For nobody else but you can destroy this dreadful Taraka.

CHAPTER XXVI,

THE STORY OF TARAKA.

Hearing this, Ram said, 'O Sir I have heard that Yakshas possess little strength or prowess. How could this woman then possess the strength of thousand elephants ?" Visvamitra replied, "Listen how she has come to possess this great strength. Formerly, there was a mighty Yaksha named Suketu but he had no issue. He was pure and used to practise great austerities. Brahma was highly pleased at this and conferred on him a daughter endowed with the strength of thousand elephants. She is Taraka. When Taraka attained her youth, she was married to Jambha's son Sunda. After sometime, Taraka gave birth to a son, named Maricha. This Maricha was born as Rakshas in consequence of a curse.

Once, the great saint Agastya destroyed Sunda. After the death of Sunda, Taraka with her son determined to take revenge on the saint. Taraka in anger ran to devour Agastya. At this, the saint, cursed Maricha saying, "Do thou become a Rakhasa," He also cursed Taraka saying, "since in frightful form you came to devour a man you be a Rakhasi of terrible form,"

Thus being cursed by Agastya, Taraka laid waste this fair region, where Agastya is engaged in medi-

tation and sacred rites. Do thou, therefore, O descendant of Raghu, destroy the terrible Rakshasi for the welfare of Brahmans and cows. Now in the three worlds none but you dare to slay this cursed Yakshi. Nor should you shrink from killing her for the interest of the four orders of castes, simply from the consideration that she is a woman. An act may be cruel or sinful yet it should be performed by a ruler for the protection of his subjects. This is the eternal rule of conduct of those who are engaged in the work of administration. O Kukustha! kill this wicked Taraka, as in the days of yore Indra slew Virochan's daughter Manthara when she tried to destroy the world. O! Ram formerly Vishnu also destroyed Kavya's mother, the devoted wife of saint Bhrigu, when at the request of the Asuras she desired for the destruction of Indra. Gods and princes have killed many wicked women. Therefore, O Ram, banish your apathy against woman-slaughter and kill this wicked one."

CHAPTER XXVII.

DEATH OF TARAKA.

Hearing this, Raghava with folded hands replied, "O mighty saint, at the time of coming, father has asked me to obey you in all your commands. So I shall kill Taraka in the interest of all people."

Saying this Ram took up his formidable bow and twanged the bow-string, resounding the whole forest with its sound. At this sound, the denizens of the forest were greatly perturbed and Taraka too, at first, was greatly amazed and then in great anger rushed towards the direction from which the sound proceeded.

Beholding that colossal, hideous figure Ram addressing Lakshman. said,

"Look Lakshman! how terrible is that Yakshini! Her very sight strikes terror even in the hearts of the brave. She possess all the spells of a witch. I shall cut her nose and ears, but I have not the heart to kill her since she is a woman."

As Ram said this, Taraka in extreme wrath rushed towards him with uplifted arms and thundering roars.

Thereupon, Visvamitra said, "May victory attend the descendant of Raghu."

Instantly Taraka raised a cloud of dust from the ground and began to shower a fussilade of stones. Thereupon Ram in anger, with his shafts, cut off the hands of Taraka. And when she was roaring in agony, Lakshman lopped off her nose and ears. Thereupon she assumed various forms and began to shower stones being invisible to the sight. Having seen Ram and Lakshman exposed to a regular fussilade of stones, Visvamitra said, "O Ram banish thy aversion to woman-slaughter. She is highly wicked and impious. Therefore kill her before dusk, for Rakshasas grow most formidable when darkness sets in."

Ram then smothered the Yakshi with his shafts, but still the dreadful Yakshi rushed towards Ram. Ram then pierced her breast with arrows and she dropped down dead. At her destruction the gods with Indra at their head, blessed both the great saint Visvamitra and Ram and Lakshman the above and asked Visvamitra to confer on Ram the heavenly arms as he was worthy of them, and great work of the gods would be accomplished by him.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

HEAVENLY ARMS.

After the night was over, Visvamitra said to Ram, "I have been greatly pleased with you. May all good crown your life. I shall now confer on you some celestial weapons, with the help of which you will be able to conquer everything at ease."

Having mentioned the names of various weapons Visvamitra sat facing the east deeply absorbed in meditation. Then those heavenly arms* appeared and said, "O Ram! We are you are slaves, you may do with us whatever you like."

Ram in cheerful mind touching them, said, "Appear before me when I remember you."

Thus pure Ram having received those heavenly weapons, addressing Visvamitra, said, "Please teach me how to use these heavenly arms; how to apply them and to withdraw them." Visvamitra then taught him the Mantras about their use.

Having acquired skill in the use of heavenly arms Ram again proceeded along his journey, and in his way he met a pleasant and beautiful

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* The weapons have been poetically endowed with life and speech.

forest, and out of curiosity he asked Visvamitra whose hermitage it was.

Visvamitra replied, "It was formerly the hermitage of Vaman, and here he attained his spiritual bliss and therefore the place is known as Siddhasram."

In the days of yore, Lord Vishnu dwelt here for many thousand years. At that time, Virochana's son, Vali, the famous Danava king, ruled over the three worlds by conquering Indra and other deities by his might. At one time, king Vali performed a great sacrifice. Then the Gods with Agni at their head, approached Vishnu and requested him to do a thing for the benefit of the Gods before Vali's sacrifice was over. They said, "People from various quarters are going to the sacrificial place for alms and having their prayers granted, and Vali too gives whatever one begs of him. Therefore for the benefit of the Gods please assume the form of a Dwarf."

When the Gods thus implored Narayan, Kashyapa with Aditi was observing a long vow, and time came for receiving boon from Vishnu.

Vishnu then appeared before Kashyapa ; and Kashyapa said, "Myself, Aditi and other Gods pray that you may incarnate as my son in the womb of Aditi."

Then Narayan took his birth in Aditi's womb as a dwarf or Vaman. Vaman appearing before Vali asked for three feet of ground, and under the plea of asking for alms he covered the three worlds by

three foot steps. Having thus restrained Vali* he again made Indra the lord of the three worlds, And here dwelt Vaman, and myself, out of reverence towards him, have selected the spot as my hermitage. Here you will have to slay those wicked Rakshasas who come here to disturb the sacrifice. This hermitage is as much thine as mine."

Saying this, Visvamitra entered the forest with Ram and Lakshman, like the moon emerged from mist with the Punarvasu stars.

Ram then asked Visvamitra to begin his sacrifice. Visvamitra got himself initiated into the sacrifice that very day. Ram and Lakshman having passed the night peacefully left their beds early in the morning.

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* Vali was driven to patal or the nether regions, and Vishnu lived with him as his warder for the former's devotion and piety. It led to the origin of the Bengali proverb that too much of everything is good for nothing.

CHAPTER XXIX

FIGHT WITH THE RAKHASAS

Ram and Lakshman asked Visvamitra in the morning to indicate to them when they would have to resist Marich and Subahu. As Visvamitra was engaged in sacrifice he remained silent, at which other hermits said, "As the sage is now engaged in penance he will observe silence for six consecutive days and nights. So you protect the forest for these six nights."

At these words of the hermits, Ram and Lakshman clad in armour and with bows in hand guarded the forest day and night. Thus five days passed and on the sixth day Ram said to Lakshman, "You must now always be on your alert."

The sacrifice was going on and Visvamitra and other priests were reciting the Mantras. Kusha, Kasha,* flowers, and drinking vessels were arranged round the altar, and the sacred fire was lit upon it,. As in the rains, the sky grew cloudy and loud with thunder, so the Rakshas as began to pour.in, in great haste and noise. Marich and Subahu began to rain drops of blood on the sacrificial altar.

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*Sacred grass., used in sacrifice and other sacred rites.

At this Ram cast his eyes upwards and finding the Rakshasas rushing in a body, addressing Lakshman said, "I don't like to kill these poor Rakshasas now but I shall drive them off by the Manava weapon as wind chases off the clouds."

The Manava weapon rolled back the Rakshasas with Marich into the sea, and then with Agneya-Astra (fire arms) killed Subahu in the fight. At this all the hermits were greatly pleased and began to honour Ram like Indra, the conqueror of Gods and Asuras. Visvamitra then performed the sacrifice without further disturbance. After the performance of the ceremony, Visvamitra blessed Ram and praised him for his prowess. Thus after slaying the Rakshasas Ram and Lakshman passed the night in the forest.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE BOW.

In the morning Ram and Lakshman appeared before Visvamitra beaming like fire and said, "Please command what more we are to execute." Then the ascetics with Visvamitra replied, "A great sacrifice is to be performed by Janaka, the king of Mithila. All of us will go there. My boys, you must accompany us and you will witness there a wonderful bow. In the days of yore this bow was given to King Devarat by the Gods. Not to speak of man, Gods, Gandharvas, Asuras and Rakshasas can not put string to that bow.

Many mighty princes formerly came to examine its strength but none of them could put string to the bow. Janaka has got this bow from the Gods as a reward of his sacrifice. He now worships that bow as his deity with flowers and incense. You will behold that wonderful bow and also sacrificial rites of Janaka."

Then at the time of setting out for Mithila Visvamitra addressing the sylvan gods said, "My object has been gained. I am now proceeding towards the north to the Himalaya regions on the banks of the Bhagirathi."

Ascetics and other denizens of the forests—beasts and birds—escorted Visvamitra to a great distance. In the evening Visvamitra reached the banks of the river Sone.

CHAPTER XXXI

GENEALOGY OF VISVAMITRA.

After the performance of the evening rites Ram asked Visvamitra,

"Please tell me which place is this. I feel curious to know."

Visvamitra said, "In ancient times there was a saintly king named Kusha. He was the son of Lord Sayambhu. Kusha's wife was Baidarbhi. Four sons, like unto himself in prowess, were born to him. They were named Kushambha, Kushanabha, Amurtaraja and Vasu.

Once Kusha called his sons before him and told them to learn the art of governing the people and thereby acquire the merits of a Kshattriya.

After this the four sons founded four seats of Government.

Kushambha founded the city of Kaushambhi; Kushanabha, the city of Mahadaya; Amurtaraja, Dharmaranya and Vasu, the city of Girivraja. This Girivraja with its five hills and the river belong to Vasu. This river Sone is also known as the Maghadhi because it has issued from the province of Maghada. Flowing between the five hills it looks like a garland of flowers. Look, how its extended banks are rich with corns."

"Ghritachi was Kushanabha's wife. Hundred daughters were born unto her. In time they attained their youth. Once these young girls, beautiful as lightning in the rains, were sporting themselves with songs and dancings in the garden. Being charmed with their beauty like stars in a cloudless sky the Wind-god appeared before them and sued them for their hands saying, "Be my wives and you will enjoy long lives. Human youth is transient but I shall confer eternal youth and immortality on you."

The girls burst forth in a mocking laugh at this incoherent words of the Wind-god and said, "You know the hearts of all creatures. We also know thy might but why do you insult us thus? We are the daughters of king Kushanabha. We may rob you of your quality and rank but we refrain from it as we shall then lose our religious merits. O foolish.one! May that time be yet distant when to the insult of our virtuous father we shall ourselves choose our husbands. Father is our master. We shall accept him as our husband to whom father will be pleased to confer us."

At this, the Wind-god became highly enraged, he broke their limbs and bent their frames by entering into their bodies. The girls then returned home with their ugly forms and began to weep bitterly. Kushnabha was greatly pained at the sight of his daughters and enquired about the cause of their

miseries. The girls then narrated everything about their mishaps with the Wind-god.

At this Kushanabha was greatly pleased and he praised them for their great forbearance. "Forbearance," said he, "is charity; Forbearance is truth; Forbearance is sacrifice; Forbearance is fame; Forbearance is religion. The whole universe rests on Forbearance."

Kushanabha then thought about their marriage and consulted with his ministers.

At that time a Brahman named Chuli was engaged in great religious austerities, and one Gandharva woman called Somada—Urmilla's daughter—attended on him. After some time the ascetic was pleased with Somada and asked what he could do for her. Somada then gratefully said, "I ask for the birth of a virtuous son through your grace. I am still a maid and you be pleased to fulfil the desire of my heart."

Then ascetic Chuli being pleased with her, conferred on her a mind-begotten son called Brahmadatta. Brahmadatta. founded the great city of Kampilya. King Kushanava thought of giving his daughters to this Brahmadatta When at the time of marriage Brahmadatta touched the hands of his brides all their ugliness and crookedness of forms were at once removed, and they got back their former beauty. After marriage Brahmadatta returned with his wives to Kampilya.

After this Kushnabha performed the Putresthi sacrifice for the birth of a son. When the sacrifice was began, king Kusha addressing Kushanabha said, "My boy, you will be soon blessed with a virtuous son named Gadhi and you will become famous on account of Gadhi."

Then, after sometime, a highly virtuous son named Gadhi was born to Kushanava. Oh, Kakustha ! That pious Gadhi is my father. I am called Kaushika because I am sprung from Kusha's line. I had a sister born before me and her name was Satyavati and she was married to Richika. Following her lord she ascended Heaven in her person and my generous sister Kushiki assumed the form of a river for the welfare of all creatures. My sister is now a noble river issuing from the Himalayas. Out of affection for my sister, Kushiki, I live in the vicinity of the Himalayas. It was for the purpose of completing the sacrifice I came to Siddhasram. I have told you the history of my life. Now you retire to sleep. The trees stand motionless, the birds of the air and beasts of the field are hushed in silence. The sky is illumined with bright stars like blooming eyes."

Ram and Lakshman then retired to sleep,

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE ORIGIN OF THE GANGES.

In the morning Visvamitra roused Ram and Lakshman from sleep and set out for their journey. After walking a long distance they saw the sacred Janhavi visited by swans and cranes. They then bathed in the stream and offered oblations to the Gods and to the manes of their ancestors. Ram then asked Viswamitra, "Oh, holy sire! I wish to hear how the Ganga flowing in three directions and embracing the three worlds falls into the Ocean —the lord of rivers".

Viswamitra replied, "Oh Ram! Himavat (the Himalayas) is the foremost of mountains and hills. Two lovely daughters were born to him. Mena, the beautiful daughter of Meru, was the beloved wife of Himavat, and Ganga is her elder daughter. Her second daughter is known as Uma. Once upon a time the Gods in a body besought Himavat for Ganga flowing in three directions. Thereupon for the welfare of the three worlds he conferred his daughter on them flowing at will and sanctifying all beings. The Gods then went away with Ganga. The other daughter adopted a stern vow and practised asceticism. Himavat

married Uma to Rudra. Oh Raghava! These daughters of Himavat are worshipped by all."

Ram and Lakshman then requested Viswamitra why Ganga flowed in three directions. Thereupon Visvamitra said, "In days of yore the blue-throated God, Mahadev, took a wife and indulged in amorous sports but no son was born to him though hundred years of the Gods had passed away. The Gods became naturally anxious: they then prayed to Mahadev. Rudra being pleased, restrained his divine energy and cast the germinal seed on earth. The earth overflowed with that divine energy. Fire and Wind then entered into it and developed into a white hill and a forest of glossy Sara reeds. And in this Sara jungle mighty Kartikeya sprang from Fire. Uma then cursed the Gods in anger saying that since she failed in getting a son their wives would be issueless. She then cursed the earth that she would have various forms and many would lord over it and she would never experience motherly affection. Seeing the Gods thus distressed, Byomkesh went towards the west and engaged himself in religious meditation. I shall now tell you the sacred history of Bhagirathi. When Pashupati was engaged in austerities with Parvati, Gods approached Brahma and asked for their Commander-in-chief which the latter had previously promised. Then the lotus-born Brahma replied,

"Curse of Uma will not fail. Therefore a son from

Fire will be born in the Mandakini, the celestial Ganges. That son will be your Commander-in-chief. The elder sister Ganga will acknowledge the boy as her younger sister's, Uma's son, and he will also be most dear to Uma. The Gods then asked Fire to throw the energy of Pashupati into the Mandakini and the celestial stream assumed the form of a beautiful woman and bore the energy in her womb. Ganga being overwhelmed with that divine energy, cast it off at the words of Fire near the Himalayas. As it came out of her it glittered like a mass of molten gold and in consequence of his exceeding lustre all objects near about were turned into gold and silver. Distant objects were turned into copper and iron, and its execreta into lead. In this way various metals came into existence. My boy, gold is therefore known as Jatarupa, because it derived its effulgence from another. As soon as the energy was cast a son was born. Indra and other Gods requested Kirtika stars to give suck to the boy with their milk. The stars agreed and the Gods said, "Oh Kirtika, this son will be called Kartikeya and will be famous in the three worlds." Kartikeya sucked six stars with his six mouths, and thus Kartikeya was brought up. He is highly beautiful in person and he conquered the Danavas by his might. Oh Ram! who worships this Kartikeya is blessed with longevity and with sons and grandsons and live with him after death."

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE DESCENT OF THE GANGES.

Maharshi Kaushika resumed—"A pious king named Sagar once ruled in Ayodhya. He had two wives named Keshini and Sumati. Keshini was the daughter of the king of Bidharva, and Sumati of Maharshi Kashyapa. For obtaining son, king Sagar with his wives repaired to the Himalayas and began to practise religious penance. Maharshi Bhrigu lived near that place. Sagar used to worship him. Saint Bhrigu was greatly pleased with Sagar and blessed him saying that he would obtain both fame and sons; that one of the wives would deliver sixty thousand sons and the other only one. Then, after a length of time, the elder queen Keshini brought forth a son called Asamanja, and Sumati delivered a gourd, and when it burst open, came out sixty thousand sons of Sagar. These sons in time attained their beauty and youth, and Asamanja got a son by the name of Anshuman—beloved of all men. Long after this, king Sagara thought of performing a sacrifice. The sacrifice was held in the region between the Himalayas and the Vindhya mountains. Prince Anshuman followed the sacrificial horse, but Vasava assuming the form of a Rakshasa stole away the horse.

At this, the priests asked the king to bring back the horse, or the sacrifice would be defective and it would bring misfortune. The king then asked his sixty thousand sons to search the whole world encircled by the oceans,.and even to delve the earth to find out the horse. They then began to roam about the earth but failing to find out the horse each began to delve the earth several yoyanas in length and breadth. The earth thus being cruelly rent sent forth loud groans. Thus the earth was dug for sixty thousand yoyanas. The sons of Sagar dug all around Jammudwipa. Thereupon the Gods, the Asuras, Gandharvas and Pannagas appeared before Brahma and said how the sons of Sagar were creating havoc for the sacrificial horse. The Grandsire then addressing them said, "Earth belongs to Vasudeva, as she is his wife, and assuming the form of Kapila, he always protects the earth, so the sons of Sagara will be destroyed by the wrath of Kapila."

The Gods then departed rejoicing at Brahma's words.

Having excavated the earth far and wide the sons of Sagar returned to their father and reported of their failure in finding the horse. Sagar then asked his sons again to delve the earth. The sons then again rushed towards the depth of the earth, As they dug deeper and deeper they came across the elephant of the quarter called Virupaksha,

huge like a mountain, holding the earth on its head. When this mighty elephant from fatigue shakes his head then occurs earthquake ! They then penetrated the east and the south and in the southern quarter they saw another mighty elephant named Mahapadma, holding the earth on its head. Likewise they beheld in the West the great elephant Sumanasa, similarly in the North they saw Bhadra, white as snow, holding the earth on him. Then Sagara's sons began to dig the North-eastern quarter* in rage and they came across Vasudeva in the form of Kapila, and they found the sacrificial horse close by him. They then in their rage rushed towards Kapila, thinking that the latter had stolen the horse.

At this Kalipa was greatly enraged and uttered a terrible roar and the sons of Sagara were at once reduced into ashes.

Seeing the delay of his sons, king Sagar asked his grandson Anshuman to search for them. Prince Anshuman after enquires arrived at the spot where the sons of Sagar were reduced to ashes. He was overwhelmed with grief at the sad fate of his uncles and wished to offer oblations of water to them, but he found no water there. Then he saw Vinata's son Garura, maternal uncle of the

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* The site is now identified near the place where the Ganges falls into the sea.

sons of Sagara, Garura then addressing Anshuman said, "Do not lament. Their destruction was for the welfare of all creatures. They have been reduced to ashes by Kapila. So do not offer them water but perform their watery rites with the sacred waters of Ganga. These ashes on being watered by Ganga, those sixty thousand sons will go to heaven. Therefore go back with the sacrificial horse and complete the sacrifice of your grandfather."

Mighty Anshuman then returned with the horse and narrated to the king everything faithfully. The king then finished the sacrifice in sorrow. The king after reigning for thirty thousand years ascended the heaven but he did not see who brought the sacred Ganga on earth.

When Sagar was bowed with age the people elected Anshuman to the throne. Anshuman proved to be a great ruler. Anshuman's son was the celebrated Dilip, who was a great king. After conferring the kingdom on Dilip, king Anshuman retired to the Himalayas, where after practising religious austerities for 32,000 years he ascended the heaven. Prince Dilip was greatly mortified when he heard about the unnatural death of his ancestors, and he became anxious for their salvation. After sometime a son named Bhagirath was born to virtuous Dilip. Dilip died leaving the kingdom to Bhagirath after a reign of thirty thousand years.

Pious Bhagirath was without any issue. In order

to bring Ganga on earth Bhagirath practised severe austerities in the locality of Gokarna.

At last, Brahma was pleased with his penance and appeared to grant him a boon. Bhagirath then said in folded hands, "If you are pleased to grant me boon, may Sagar's sons receive oblations of water from me, and their ashes be laved by the waters of Ganga, may they thereby attain heaven."

Brahma replied, "O mighty Bhagirath, noble is thy end. Let your desire be fulfilled and good betide you. You ask for Hara's service for Ganga's fall, the earth won't be able to bear."

Bhagirath then prayed to Siva for a year, Pashupati then said to Bhagirath, "I have been pleased with you. I shall hold the mountain's daughter on my head." Then Ganga with great impetuous force precipitated herself from the sky on Siva's head. And Ganga thought of carrying away Sankara by her dash. At this Sankara grew angry and he thought of confining her. And O Ram! when Ganga fell on Rudra's tangled locks, resembling the Himavat, inspite of her endeavours she could not disengage herself from the matted locks and reach the earth! She thus remained confined for many years. Bhagarath then again plunged himself in severe austerities. Thereupon Siva was greatly pleased and cast off Ganga towards the Vindu lake. As she was let loose seven streams branched off from

her. Three streams flowed towards the east while the Suchakshu, the Sita and the Sindhu flowed in the west. But the seventh stream followed Bhagirath's chariot. The royal saint went ahead and Ganga followed him. Then the celestials looked upon Ganga descending on earth. All in joy witnessed the descent of the Gánges as it followed its course of Bhagirath's car.

In her course, Ganga flooded the sacrificial ground of the great saint Jahnu. At this Jahnu drank her up in wrath. Thereupon the Gods and others began to pray to Jahnu. The saint being thus propitiated released Ganga through his ears. Therefore Ganga is known as Jahnavi or Jahnu's daughter. Then Ganga again began to follow the wake up Bhagirath's car, and having reached the ocean she entered the subterranean region. And when the sacred waters of the Ganga overflowed the heaps of ashes of the Sagar's sons, their sins were washed off and they at once attained heaven.

Then Brahma spoke to Bhagirath, "O most puissant of men! Sagar's sons have been delivered and they shall for ever live in heaven. This Ganga shall become your eldest daughter and be known as the Bhagirathi. She is also known as Tripathaga because she flows in three directions. Do thou now here offer oblations of water to your grandsires. Your mighty ancestors Anshuman and Dilip had failed to bring Ganga on earth. For having

brought Ganga thou shalt also attain heavenly regions. Good betide thee."

Bhagirath then offered oblations to the sons of Sagara and returned back to his capital. O Ram, I have told you the story of Ganga's descent, whoever recites this sacred story attains the favour of his ancestors and Gods, and whoever listens to it has all his desires fulfilled, his sins are removed, and he attains longevity and fame."

They then passed their night on the bank of the Ganges.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE RISE OF NECTAR.

On the following morning, they crossed the Ganges and reached the city of Vishala. Ram wanted to know something about the city. The great ascetic Visvamitra said, "O Ram, listen to what befell this city. In ancient times, in the Satya yuga, the sons of Diti and Aditi thought as how could they be immortal and be free from disease and old age. Then it struck their minds that by churning the Ocean of Milk they would obtain Amrita or nectar. They then began to churn the Ocean with the Mandara hill as the churning rod and Vasuki as the cord. After churning for thous and years the serpent Vasuki began to vomit virulent poison and bite the rock with its fangs. Thereupon, rose a deadly poison like fire and it began to scorch the whole univeerse. Then the Suras and the Asuras ran to great Sankara, crying, "Save us, save us, O Rudra !"

Then Hari appeared before Mahadev and said, "Since you are the foremost of the Gods, that has first come out of the ocean is due to thee. So receive the first offering in the form of poison."

Finding the Gods in distress, Siva drank the dreadful poison, as if it were nectar, then leaving the Gods went away.

The celestials then resumed their churning. But after sometime suddenly the Mandar hill began to sink into the subterranean region. Hrishikesh then assuming the form of a tortoise supported the hill on his back, and taking hold of the top of the hill by his hand began to churn the deep. Another thousand years elapsed. Then arose Dhanwantari, the father of medicines bearing in his hands a stick and a Kamandulu. After him rose the beautiful damsels called Apsaras—so called because they emerged from water. As neither the Suras nor the Asuras accepted them, they became public wives. Then arose Varuni, the daughter of Varuna and the Goddess of wine (Sura) and she looked for acceptance. She was not accepted by the Diti's son so they are called Asuras, and as Aditi's sons aceepted her they are known as the Suras. Then rose Viswasrava, the best of horses, and Kaustabha the best of gems; and last rose Nectar. Then ensued a great fight over the Nectar between Aditi's and Diti's sons, and many Asuras were killed in the fray. In this havoc Vishnu appeared in the form of an exceedingly beautiful woman stole away the nectar and destroyed Asuras who ran after him.

The sons of Diti thus being slain, Diti was greatly mortified with grief and prayed for the birth of a son for the destruction of Indra, and began to practise great austerities. As she was en-

gaged in austerities, the thousand-eyed Indra attended on her and served her with great devotion and respect. Diti was greatly pleased with Indra and she said to him that after ten years she would deliver a son who would be a brother to Indra and not his foe. One day, when worshipful Diti was sleeping in her bed, Indra cut the foetus in her womb into seven parts by his thunder. At this the foetus began to cry at which Indra asked it to be silent saying, "Don't cry"—(Ma ruda). Diti then rose from sleep and said, "Don't kill it let the seven parts of the embryo be the guardian deities of the wind. They will be known as Marut as you have said Ma ruda (Don't cry). Hearing this Indra bowed to Diti and worshipped her. This is the place where Indra attended on Diti, O Ram, powerful Ikswaku had a son by the name of Vishala, this city of Vishala was built by him. Vishala's son is Hem Chandra, Hem Chandra's son Suchandra and his son was Srinjaya, Srinjaya's son was Sahadeva, his son Kushaswa and his son Somadatta now rules over the city."

Hearing of the arrival of Visvamitra and Ram, the king of Vishala welcomed them with great hospitality. Visvamitra on his enquiry told him the object of their travel. After passing the night at Vishala they reached Mithila the next day. The ascetics were greatly delighted at the sight of Mithila while surveying the city, Ram witnessed an old, solitary, but beautiful hermitage.

CHAPTER XXXV

AHALYA.

Ram then asked, "O worshipful Sir! The hermitage looks like deserted. I wish to know all about this."

Visvamitra said, "This hermitage once belonged to the great saint Gautama. He used to practise austerities here with his wife Ahalya. One day when the sage was absent, Indra the lord of Sachi, entered the hermitage in the garb of Gautama, and addressing Ahalya said "O, my enchanting beauty! Amorous ones do not wait for their monthly periods, so you fulfil my desire now."

Perverse Ahalya knowing that it was Indra who came in the disguise of the ascetic, agreed to his proposal. After enjoyment Ahalya said to Indra, "My desire has been fulfilled, now take me away from this place, and protect myself and yourself from the wrath of Gautama."

Indra replied, "I have been gratified, now let me go to my place."

With these words Indra, in fear of the ascetic, left the cottage in hurried steps. Therafter the mighty sage Gautama after bathing in the holy waters and after the performance of oblations, and with Kusha grass

and faggots in hand appeared before the cottage like a flame of fire. At his sight Indra's face darkened. Seeing Indra thus stealing away from his cottage in the garb of an ascetic he cursed him in anger, "Since you have enjoyed my wife assuming my form, you will be sexless." Addressing Ahalya, Gautama said, "You will live in the hermitage being unseen by others, your bed will be in ashes, you will feed only on air and your remorse will be unbounded. Thus you will live for many thousand years. When the son of Dasarath, Ram will come to this forest, you should minister unto him with the rites of hospitality without covetousness, then you will be absolved from your sin, will get back your former form and will be reunited with me."

With these words Gautama left his hermitage and went to the Himalays for meditation.

Indra after a great trouble and with the help of the Gods got back his manhood after a long time.

Then Ram with Lakshman entered Gautama's hermitage after Visvamitra, and found Ahalya had acquired greater beauty in consequence of asceticism, too dazzling to be gazed upon even by the Gods. It appeared, as if, the Creator with great care created this excellence of womanly beauty. She was wonderfully beautiful like a flame in the midst of smoke, like the full moon enveloped in mist, or like the glare of the Sun hidden in clouds. Ahalya remained concealed till the expiry of her curse. But as soon as she

was absolved from it, she became visible to all. Ram and Lakshman then bowed to her, but Ahalya remembering Gautama's words caught hold of their feet and offered them Arghya and water and received them with warm hospitality.

Then flowers were showered from above and Gods praised her for her piety. Maharshi Gautama came to know all this through his Yoga. He returned to his hermitage and began to practise religious penance with Ahalya with a cheerful heart.

CHAPTER XXXVI

VISVAMITRA.

Then Ram and Lakshman with Visvamitra proceeded towards the north-east, and arrived at the sacrifice of Janaka. Ram was struck with the splendour of Janaka's sacrifice. Many Brahmans and ascetics had assembled there from various quarters.

When the royal saint Janaka heard of Visvamitra's arrival he hastened to receive them with his priest Satananda and other Brahmins versed in the Vedas, and offering Arghya to Visvamitra said, "To-day, by the grace of the Gods my sacrifice has been crowned with success, since you have graced the occasion by your hallowed presence."

Janaka then respectfully asked Visvamitra. "Who are these two Godlike youths, equipped with swords, bows and quivers? They appear mighty as the Gods! As the sun and the moon shine in the sky so they have brightened up the place. There is great resemblance between the two. Whose sons are these raven-locked youths, and why they have undertaken such an arduous journey?"

Visvamitra replied, "O King, they are the sons of king Dasharath." Visvamitra then related all that happened in the journey, the destruction of the Rakshas, and the removal of Ahalya's curse.

Then virtuous Satananda, the eldest son of Maharshi Gautama observed, "I am extremely grateful at the news of the removal of my mother's curse. Did she worship you with fruits and flowers ? Did you accept my father's hospitaity ?"

Eloquent Visvamitra replied "Nothing has been left undone. Your mother has been reunited with your father, like Renuka with Jamadagni."

Then Satananda addressing Ram said, "Since mighty Visvamitra, the foremost of the ascetics, is your protector, you are the most fortunate man in the three worlds. I shall now relate to you how this great ascetic of wonderful deeds, Visvamitra, has attained highest Brahminhood."

In ancient time's there was a king named Kusha. His son was Kushanabha. Kushanabha's son was Gadhi. This holy and mighty Visvamitra is Gadhi's son. This learned saint long ruled over his kingdom. Once upon a time this sage began to sojourn over the earth with his army. At length, the mighty conqueror Visvamitra reached the hermitage of Vasistha—green with plants and trees, and adorned with fruits and flowers and visited by birds and deer. Pious ascetics lived in that holy hermitage ; some of whom lived only on water ; some on air ; some on seer leaves ; and some on roots and fruits. Visvamitra was greatly pleased at this sight. Visvamitra then went to Maharshi Vasistha and enquired after his welfare. Then after mutual greetings, sage Vasistha pressed the king

to accept his hospitality. At this, Visvamitra said that enough hospitality had already been shown by his kind words, but Vasistha insisted Visvamitra to receive his hospitality with his men and army. Visvamitra at last consented.

Sage Vasistha then summoned his patri-coloured, sinless, sacrificial cow, Savala, and addressing her said, "The King with his army is my guest so you entertain them with proper food and drink. You fulfil my desire and gratify them with all delicacies. Therefore procure sufficient food without delay." At these words of Vasistha, the cow Savala produced various eatables gratifying to the palate. She produced sugar-canes, fried rice, excellent wine called Gani, costly drinks, various kinds of food, rice, Payasa, soups, Dadhikulya wine, and other palatable food with silver dishes (for serving to the guests). Visvamitra was greatly pleased at this hospitality, and after expressing his thanks he asked for the cow saying, "I shall give yau a million of cows, please give your Savala in exchange of them. Your sacrificial cow is indeed a rare gem. The King by right is entitled to all gems, so you confer this Savala on me. for according to law I am entitled to it."

At this, Vasistha said, "I can not part with Savala for millions and millions of cows, nor for all the gold and silver you propose to offer. This cow follows me like the reputation of a noble man. I live on her and I perform my sacrifices with her help. I

tell you sincerely Savala is my everything. Its very sight fills me with joy. Therefore I can not give you the cow."

Visvamitra then again implored for the cow and promised him rich provinces, thousands of elephants, horses, golden chariots and various kinds of jewels in its exchange. But Vasistha again stoutly refused. Visvamitra then finding the ascetic thus unyielding took the cow forcibly. Then the cow thought with tears, "Has the saint really forsaken me? Why the royal servants drag me thus?"

Then Savala tore herself off from the King's servants and ran to Vasistha and said, "Have you forsaken me? Royal servants are taking me away by force?"

Vasistha then sorrowfully answered, "No Savala, I have not forsaken you. You have done no injury to me. The King is taking you by force from me. My powəris not equal to his might. Look he has elephants, horses, chariots and a vast army. He is a Kshattriya and a ruler of the earth. Moreover, he is my guest and it is not proper to injure the guest."

Then Savala humbly said, "O saint, Kshattriya's power is not much, but greater is the might of a Brahman; the power of a Brahmin is supernatural and it exceeds that of a Kshattriya. Though Visvamitra is exceedingly powerful yet he is not a match for you. I can work wonders like Brahma. Please permit me, I shall baffle all the attempts

of this wicked King and humble his pride to the dust."

Vasistha then told Savala to produce soldiers to destroy Visvamitra's army. Savala then produced (by her supernatural powers) a number of Palhavas by her lowing. And Visvamitra began to destroy those Pallavas in rage. At this, Savala produced the terrible Yavanas along with the Sakas.* They were formidable in power and were armed with sharp swords and adzes. They were yellow-coloured and were clad in yellow dress. Visvamitra in great rage began to hurl weapons at them. Thereupon the Yavanas, the Kambojeans and the barbarians became sorely afflicted.

Then Savala again created a fresh army. From her thundering roars came into existence the Kombojeans, resplendent as the Sun; from her udder sprang the Barbarians;† from her private parts came the Yavanas; from her anus the Sakas; from the pores of her hairs sprang the Haritas and the Kiratas. These soldiers began to destroy Visvamitra's army.

At this hundred sons of Visvamitra with their weapons rushed towards Vasistha. At this Vasistha

* Thus accounts for the origin of the different races of people who clashed with the Indians in later times.

† Has this word Barbara, or the barbarians, been used in the sense as we find in Greek—i. e., unknown people or strangers—Or this mean the savage people? Cf. Milton: "barbaric pearls and gold"—Translator.

uttered a terrific roar and all the sons of Visvamitra were reduced into ashes. Seeing his sons thus destroyed, Visvamitra was overwhelmed with shame. He then returned to his capital with a broken heart and after installing the only surviving son to the throne, repaired to the Himalays and began to practise great austerities please Byomkesha to ask for a boon.

After a length of time, God Mahadeva appeared. Visvamitra then asked for bow and arrows with their mysterious Mantras. Being thus endowed with divine arms Visvamitra again in haughtiness attacked Vasistha's hermitage. At the approach of Visvamitra, the ascetics living in that forest began to run away in fear, though Vasistha assured them and asked them to stop. Visvamitra then hurled his formidable weapon against Vasistha. But Vasistha in rage destroyed all his arms and defeated him. Visvamitra was thus vanquished by Brahminical power. "Shame on Kshatriya's power. I must anyhow attain Brahminhood."

Great Visvamitra was deeply mortified at this defeat, then having resolved to perform severe austerities ne repaired to the south with his queen. There he passed his days in religions meditations living on fruits and roots. During that period four sons called Habispanda, Madhuspanda, Drihanetra and Maharath• were born to him. Thus thousand years rolled off, then Brahma—the grand sire of all

created beings—appeared and said, "O king! You will be counted as a royal saint and henceforward you will be known as a Rajarshi."

Then Visvamitra hung down his head in shame and thought, "Even after such austerities the gods consider me only as a Rajarshi. I shall, therefore, practise more severe austerities to attain Brahminhood." Having thus resolved he again engaged himself in severe penance.

At that time, king Trisanku of Ikshawaku's line thought of performing a sacrifice in order to attain heaven in his material body, and spoke about it to Vasistha. But Vasistha refused to perform the ceremony, as the idea was absurd. At this king Trisankhu aproached Vashistha's sons and asked them to help him by performing the sacrifice.

But Vasistha's sons grew angry at this and cursed him saying that he would become a Chandala. And when the night was over the King attained Chandalhood. He became dark as blue, his skin grew rough, his hair grew short, his body was besmeared with ashes, and he wore a garland of dirty chips collected from the cremation ground! Finding the king thus reduced to a Chandala, his ministers and followers ran away from him. Trisanku then went to Visvamitra. Seeing the king thus reduced to such a miserable plight, Visvamitra was moved with pity and enquired about him. Trisanku then related how instead of attaining the object of his desire he had met with

such dire calamity, and he concluded saying, "O best of asceties! Intending to perform a sacrifice I have failed to enlist the sympathy of my spiritual preceptor. I do now find that Fate is always supreme, valour is nothing. Destiny overtakes all. Therefore grant thy favour on him whose all endeavours have been frustrated by Fate. I have no other refuge."

Having heard the King thus speak, Visvamitra's heart was moved with pity and he gave him shelter. Saint Visvamitra then asked his pupils to bring all the ascetics and saints together including Vasistha's sons. But Madodaya and other sons of Vasistha said, "How can Gods and Rishis can take part in the sacrifice of him who is a Chandala and has a Kshatriya for his priest?" Hearing this from the disciples, Visvamitra flamed in rage and uttered a terrible curse that those insolent sons would be reduced to ashes and for seven hundred births would roam over the world feeding on dog's flesh and gathering deadman's clothes. They would be known as Musthikas despicable and of wicked practices; then addressing the assembled hermits Visvamitra said, this descendent of Ikshaku is virtuous and generous. He has come to me for shelter. He wants to go to Heaven with his mortal body. So please be engaged with me in the sacrifice." The sacrifice then begun and Visvamitra after a length of time invoked all the Gods to receive their shares of the sacrifice but the celestials refused to come. Thereupon

Visvamitra waxed angry and said to Trisanku, "O Lord of men ! I shall by the power of my asceticism send you bodily to the heaven, aud through my virtue you now ascend the heaven."

At these words, Trisanku began to bodily ascend into heaven. Seeing Trisanku thus ascending into heaven, Indra said, "O Trisanku, go back. You have been cursed by your spiritual guide, therefore fall headlong from it." Trisanku then began to precipitate headlong from heaven, crying unto Visvamitra, "O, save me, save me." Hearing these distressful cries, sage Visvamitra cried in wrath, "Stop." And then like a second Prajapati he created another constellation of the seven Rishis and other stars in the southern sky. "I shall create another Indra," exclaimed Visvamitra in rage, "or the world will be without a Indra." Thereupon the gods and the saints humbly said, "O highly exalted sage, this king has been cursed by his preceptor, so he doesn't deserve to ascend the heaven in mortal frame."

Visvamitra then replied, "O Gods, I have promised to send Trisanku to heaven in person. I can't prove false to my vow. So either Trisanku must dwell in heaven in person or the stars created by me will ever continue to exist."

The gods then said, "Let it be so, The stars created by you will shine in the sky outside the Zodaic circle, and Trisanku with bent head will live there like an immortal, and all these luminous bodies

shall follow Trisanku as if he has attained heaven." Virtuous Visvamitra agreed to this. After the Gods were gone Visvamitra addressing the ascetics said, "Lo! an interruption to penance has been created by Trisanku in the south. So let us repair to the west and carry on our rites in the sacred pilgrimage of Pushkara." Visvamitra then went to the west and began to practise great austerities. By that time Ambarisha, the king of Ayodhya, was performing a sacrifice, and Indra at the time of sacrifice stole away the sacrificial animals. At this, his priest told the king either to secure those animals or purchase a man in their stead. Then Ambarisha went in search of those animals and arrived at the hills of Bhrigutunga. There he found the son of Maharshi Richik with his wife and children, and after stating everything he asked for a son of his, and promised him millions of cows in exchange. At this Richik replied, "O King, I can not sell the eldest in any way." Then his wife said, "The youngest is my darling, I can't part with him." Hearing the parents thus speak, the second son Shunashefa said, "Father is not willing to sell the eldest, mother doesn't want to dispose off the youngest ; it, therefore, seems that I am the only saleable son, so you take me with you."

Ambarisha then took him in his chariot by giving millions of cows and sufficient gold.

At mid-day, King Ambarisha reached Pushkara. There Shunashefa found his maternal uncle Visva-

mitra engaged in meditation. At his sight Shunashefa, afflicted with thirst and hunger, begged Visvamitra to give him shelter. Then Visvamitra assured him and asked his own sons to assume the forms of the sacrificial animals in order to save the hermit's son from Ambarisha. At this Visvamitra's sons tauntingly remarked, "You want to save another's son at the cost of your own ones! It is as good as to feed upon one's own flesh out of commiseration towards other creatures." At this Visvamitra grew angry and cursed his own sons as he did the sons of Vasistha. Then addressing Shunashefa Visvamitra said, "You now put on a zone of Kasha grass, a garland of red flowers, besmear your body with red sandal and pray to Agni close to the Vaishnavi sacrificial stake, and I give you two hymns, you chant them at the time of Ambarisha's sacrifice* and your life will be saved."

Shunashefa then with a devoted heart took those Vedic Gathas (songs).

When Ambarisha arrived with Shunashefa, Shunashefa like a sacrificial animal was tied to the sacrificial post. Shunashefa then began to chant those Vedic hymns and to pray to Indra, Agni and Vishnu. Indra was then pleased with Shunashefa. He blessed him with a long life, and thus Shunashefa was saved.

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* This shows that human sacrifice at that time fell into disuse and was discarded by the people.

After thus saving Shunashefa's life, Visvamitra again engaged himself in deep meditation and severe austerities at Pushkara. After a lapse of time Brahma appeared and said, "From this time you will be reckoned as a saint." But Visvamitra continued his rigid austerities. At one time the heavenly nymph Menaka was bathing in the sacred waters of Pushkara. Visvamitra was bewitched by her fascinating beauty and took her to his hermitage. Visvamitra passed ten years with Menaka, but it soon became evident to him that his penance had been broken. He was then stung with remorse and shame and thought that it was a deep-laid game of the Gods. Menaka was greatly frightened by the saint's change and stood before him in folded hands. But Visvamitra assured her in sweet words and commenced his austerities again. Brahma again appeared before him and greeted him as Maharshi. Then Visvamitra respectfully said, "You have not conferred on me Brahminhood because I have not as yet succeeded in conquering my senses." Brahma replied, "If your mind be not disturbed even in presence of temptations you will know that you have subdued your senses, therefore strive after that."

Then Visvamitra again commenced severe austerities. He prayed with uplifted arms feeding on air; in summer, he surrounded himself with five fires; in rains, he remained in uncovered place: and in winter,

day and night he stood immersed in water. Thus passed thousand years.

Thereupon Indra, the king of Gods, was greatly alarmed by the austerities of the great sage and planning some mischief to Visvamitra he summoned Rambha before him. Rambha pleaded to be excused for she dared not disturb the penance of the Rishi. Indra then encouraged her saying that Cupid and Spring would help her in her mission. Then the beautiful nymph, Rambha, descended on earth and began to sing rapturous songs in accompaniment of cuckoo's notes. Visvamitra was, at first, greatly delighted at hearing this but he immediately saw through the deep game of Indra and he cursed Rambha in extreme rage, condemning her to be turned into marble and remain as such for ten thousand years. Unfortunate Rambha was turned into stone and Indra and Cupid ran away in fear. But Visvamitra was struck with remorse for thus losing his temper. He found that for his lust and anger he could not attain his object. He then left his northern quarters and came to the east, and engaged himself in severer austerities and was absorbed in meditation. He remained listless and silent like a hillock for thousand years. Then after the expiry of thousand years he wished to break his fast and as he was about to take his food, Indra came in the disguise of a Brahmin and asked for food. Sage Kaushik willingly gave him all and re-

mained himself without any food. Visvamitra then suspended his breath and again plunged himself in meditation for thousand years.

Then all the celestials and other immortals approached Brahma and said, "The world will be scorched by the fire of his penance unless his prayer is granted. Even the kingdom of Heaven must be given to him if he wants it, or the creation will be destroyed."

Then Brahma and other Gods appeared before Visvamitra and said, "We have been greatly pleased with your penance. You have attained Brahmanhood by your penance. You will live long and from this day you are a Brahman." Visvamitra then said, "If I have attained Brahmanhood in truth, together with longevity, let myself be duly acknowledged by Omkar and Bashatkar and the Vedas and by Vasistha, Brahman's son, the foremost amongst those learned in the Vedas and in the Kshattriya Veda, or I shall again devote myself to meditation and penance."

Then at the request of the Gods, friendship was struck between Vasistha and Visvamitra and the Gods in a body declared Visvamitra a Brahman.* Thus Visvamitra attained Brahmanhood. He is the foremost of the Rishis, he is like the embodiment of religion itself."

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* Visvamitra—like Vasistha, a great Vedic Rishi and is the author of many famous hymns and Mantras of the Rig Veda.

Thus said Satananda. King Janaka then expressed his gratitude for Visvamitra's presence in his sacrifice, and accorded him warm hospitality.

It is known to all that there were some Sudra Rishis (belonging to the primitive race of India conquered by the Aryan invaders) and even some women amongst the authors of the Vedic Mantras. True, all of them were Brahmans in the truest sense of the word, for he is a Brahman who knows Brahma or the Eternal. But here we find Visvamitra striving hard to get into the Brahmanical fold—though, of course, one must undergo strict moral discipline to possess knowledge of the Eternal, which Brahmanhood really implied. It is now known even to a schoolboy that there was no caste-system in the Vedic age, but coming to the age of the Epics and Puranas we find an elaborate caste-system already established, though less inflexible and rigid, or Krishna Dvaipayan Vyasa, the great author of the Mahabharat, being born of a fisher woman, could not have been so readily recognised as a Brahman by the orthodox society. But even in the times of the Mahabharat caste pride and caste hatred were quite rampant. The great and heroic character of Karna, the most liberal of his time, was a tragic victim to caste prejudice, and his whole future was marred by the tyranny of a highly conservative society. The caste-system—with its complex theology (though has little to do with true religion)—received a rude shock in Turian rule and Buddhistic conquest of India. Northern India was swept away by these two mighty tides of militarism and spiritualism in sequence. In Bengal, Sri Chaitanya gave it another blow. India's political

inside the fortress for about a year, after which my resources were at an end. I became greatly despondent at this and prayed to the Gods. Then the Gods, in their mercy, gave me an army. I then again renewed my fight with the kings, and, at the end, those wicked princes ran away from the field after sustaining a heavy defeat. I shall now show that eventful bow to Ram and Lakshman and if Ram can put string to that bow I shall confer my daughter on him." Then Maharshi Kaushik asked Janaka to point out the bow to Ram.

Then Janaka ordered his counsellors and men to bring that Siva's bow, adorned with garlands and sandal paste. The bow was placed in an iron box on an eight-wheeled carriage. It was drawn with difficulty by hundreds of stalwart men.

Then Janaka said, "This bow was worshipped by my forefathers. Not to speak of man nor even the celestials can raise the bow or put string to it".

Then Kaushik said to Ram, "My child, behold the bow."

Ram then taking out the lid of the case saw the bow and examined it with his hand. He then asked what he would do with the bow. Would he raise it and bend it then and there? On Janaka's and the sage's replying in the affirmative, Ram, at ease, took up the bow and began to bend it in order to put a string to it and the bow was broken into two pieces with a thundering crash, and the whole place shook

as if in an earthquake. And all, except Visvamitra, Janak, Ram and Lakshman, fell unconscious on the ground!

Then all doubts about Janaki's marriage were removed from Janak's heart.

Janak then addressing Visvamitra in folded hands said, "I have witnessed the prowess and valour of Dasarath's son Ram. It is an astonishing feat. I never dreamt that such a thing could happen. Now my family will be famous by the union of Sita with Ram. Now my promise has been fulfilled and I want to marry Sita to Ram. So please permit me to send envoys to Ayodhya and fetch King Dasarath with due honours and respect, and also to send him the news that Ram and Lakshman are safe."

Visvamitra gave his assent. Janak then summoned his men and sent them to Ayodhya with a letter communicating everything therein.

The envoys of Janak reached Ayodhya after great fatigue passing three nights in their journey.

Then they were admitted before the King by the sentries. Appearing before King Dasarath who looked like an immortal, they began in a sweet and gentle voice, "My Lord, Janak, the King of Mithila, with his counsellors and priests repeatedly enquires after the welfare of you and of your staff and followers. And with Kaushik's permission the King of Mithila addresses you thus:—"You know the vow that I took formerly, that is, to confer my

'daughter on him who would succeed in bending the bow, which had baffled the efforts of so many kings previously. But that daughter of mine has been won by your son, who has arrived here with Visvamitra. O mighty King, that heavenly bow has been broken into two pieces in the presence of a large assembly of people. I shall confer on high-souled Ram my Sita, and in this way I wish to be absolved from my vow, for which I crave your kind permission. You, therefore, be good enough to arrive here speedily with your priests. It behoves you to see me absolved from my vow, and also witness the marriage of your sons.' Thus the lord of Videha, permitted by Visvamitra, asked us to communicate to you."

Hearing these words of the envoys, Dasarath was exceedingly glad and readily consented to the proposal, at which all praised the king for his decision. The king then cheerfully said, "Our journey begins even from to-morrow."

When the night was over, Dasarath spoke to Sumantra, "Let the officers in charge of the royal treasury take plenty of money and jewels, and start in advance under proper escort. Let the army march. Let Vasishta, Vamdev, Javali, Kasyapa, Markandeya and Katyayana and other Brahmans start on horseback or in palanquins. Janak's envoys asked me to start quickly ; you, therefore, yoke the horses to my chariot."

King Dasaratha then started after due prepara-

tions and his army followed him in march. After 4 days' journey all arrived at Mithila.

On Dasarath's arrival Janaka after according him a warm welcome said, "Had you a safe journey ? It is my good luck that has brought you here. Now you enjoy the pleasure of seeing your two sons married. I am also grateful for Maharshi Vasistha's presence, surrounded by the priests as Indra by the Gods. Now to my good luck all obstacles in the path of my daughter's marriage have been removed. I feel myself fortunate in having an alliance with the line of Raghu. To-morrow morning after the completion of the sacrifice you perform the marriage ceremony along with the saints and priests."

Dasarath said, "I have heard that a gift should be ratified by acceptance. So what you say will be accomplished."

Then they passed the night merrily. Next morning, Janak said to his priest Satananda, that he wanted to have his brother Kushadwaja living in the city of Sankadhya whose ramparts are guarded with pointed weapons standing on the banks of Ikshumati to come and join in the ceremony. Competent persons were then sent to fetch Kushadwaja, who also soon came to Videha at the mandate of Janak.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

RAM'S MARRIAGE.

Highly effulgent Janak and his brother Kushadwaja, having taken their seats, asked minister Sudamana to fetch King Dasarath with his sons and counsellors with all the honour due to their high rank. Sudamana then went to Dasaratha's camp and invited him to come to Janaka's court whereupon King Dasarath with his priests, counsellors went there. Dasarath then addressing Janak said, "Sage Vasistha is our family priest. With the permission of Maharshi Visvamitra and other sages he will narrate to you the genealogy of my line."

Then Vasistha began, "O King! From the Eternal Brahma who is beyond the range of human perception and stands above all proofs or inference, has come the indestructible God Brahma. Brahma's son is Marichi. Kashyapa was born of Marichi; Kashyapa's son is Vivaswat. Manu was born of Vivaswat, and this Manu is known as Prajapati. Manu's son was Ikshwaku. This Ikshwaku was the first King of Ayodhya. Ikshwaku had a son named Kukshi, Kukshi's son was Vikukshi, and Vikukshi's son was mighty

Vana ; Vana's son Anaranya. Anaranya's son Prithu and Prithu's son was Trisanku. Trisanku had a son called Dhundhumar, who was a famous King. Dhundhumar's son was Yuvanshwa, and Yuvanashwa's son Mandhata. Mandhata's son was Susandhi. Susandhi had two sons, Dhruvasandhi and Prasenjit. Famous Bharat was born of Dhruvasandhi. Bharat's son was Asita. Haihayas, Talajanghas and Sasavindas rose against Asita and defeated and crushed Asita fled to the Himalayas with his two queens, and there he died after some time. It is said that both of his queens were pregnant and one of the queens administered poison to the other to destroy the foetus. In that mountain lived sage Chyavan, son of Bhrigu. Asita's wife Kalindi went to Saint Bhargava and prayed for the birth of a son. Bhargava was pleased and said that a mighty and beautiful son would be born along with poison.

Kalindi was a widow and in due time delivered a beautiful boy along with the poison that had been administered by her co-wife. The boy was named Sagar as he was born with poison. Sagar's son was Asamanja, and Asamanja's son was Anshuman. Anshuman's son Dilip and Dilip's son Bhagirath. Bhagirath's son was Kakustha, and Kakustha's son was Raghu. Raghu's son was Provindha, he was turned to a carnivorous Rakshasa, he was afterwards known as Kalmashpada. Kalmashpada's son was Sankhan. Sankhan's son was Sudarsan, and Sudarsan

son was Agnivarna. Agnivarna's son Shighraga; and Shighraga's son was Maru. Maru's son Proshusruka, and Proshusruka's son was Ambarish.

Nahusha was born of Ambarish, and Nahusha's son was Yayati; Yayati's son Nabhag and Nabhag's son was Aja.* And Aja's son is king Dasharath. Ram and Lakshman are the sons of King Dasharath. They are truthful, virtuous and mighty and for them we solicit your two daughters. You bestow your daughters on worthy bridegrooms."

After Vasistha's words, king Janaka in folded palms said, "At the time of daughter's marriage it is the duty of a person born in a noble family to speak of his ancestry so kindly listen to the genealogy of my line. There ruled a mighty king named Nimi. Nimi's son was Mithi, and Mithi's son was Janaka and from him all the descendants born in our line are called Janaka. Janaka's son was Udavasu, Udavasu's son Nandivardhan and his son was Suketu. Suketu's son was mighty Devarat. Devarat's son was Vrihadratha, and his son was Sudhriti, and Sudhriti's son was virtuous Dhristaketu. Dhristaketu's son was Haryashwa. Haryashwa's son Maru, Maru's son Pratindhak; Pratindhak's son Kitiratha, and his son was Devamirha. Devamirha's son Vivudha. Vivudha's son Mahidhraka. Mahidhraka's

* Kalidas gives a different genealogy. He says Dilip's son Raghu, Raghu's son Aja and Aja's son Dasarath.

son Kirtirata, and Kirtirata's son was Maharoman. Maharoman's son, Swarnaroman and his son was Hraswaroman. He had two sons, eldest of the two is myself and the younger is my brother Kushadhwaja. Our aged father after making over the kingdom and Kushadhwaja to my care retired to the forest where he laid down his mortal frame. After his demise I am now looking after the kingdom.

After some time, a powerful king named Sudhanwa came from Sankashya and demanded the bow of Hara and Janaki, which I refused. Then there was a heavy fight between him and myself, in which Sudhanwa was killed and defeated. After Sudhanwa's death I have installed my heroic brother Kushadhwaja to the throne of Sankashya. Now I shall confer my two daughters in a contented mind—nymph-like beautiful Sita on Ram and my second daughter Urmila on Lakshman. Do thou, O king, perform the ceremony of Godana and offer oblations to the manes of your ancestors for Ram and Lakshman's marriage. To-day the inauspicious star Magha is in ascendant, on the third day the marriage will be celebrated under the auspices of the Uttara Phalguni star. Now for the future good of Ram and Lakshman, give away in charity cattle and gold."

Then Saint Visvamitra with Vasistha's leave said, "No other clan can be compared with that of Ikshwaku or Videha. This union between Ram and Sita and Lakshman and Urmila is desirable

in every respect. Now I have something to say, please listen to my words. Your virtuous brother Kushadhwaja has got two beautiful daughters; we solicit them for Bharat and Satrughna. All the sons of king Dasharath are handsome and valiant as the Gods. So do not hesitate for a moment." At these words, King Janaka addressing Visvamitra and Vasistha in clasped hands said, "I consider my family honoured since you mighty sages wish for such an alliance. Let therefore the daughters of Kushadwaja be married to Bharat aud Satrughna. Day after to-morrow is an auspicious day for marriage as the Uttar Phalguni star will then be on ascendant." Then addressing saint Vasistha, Janaka observed that like king Dasharath henceforward he and his brother should also be counted as disciples of Vasistha.

King Dasharath was immensely pleased with Janaka's words and after good wishes he repaired to his camp to perform Sradhha rites of his ancestors. On the following morning King Dasharath performed the Godana (gift of cows) ceremony by giving away four lakhs of cows with their horns covered in gold. Each with its calf and a bell-metal vessel for milking it.

On the day of the Godana ceremony, Bharat's maternal uncle, Yudhajit, son of Kekaya, appeared before Dasharath and informed him that he came to see Bharat, failing to find him in Ayodhya. King Dasharath warmly received the honorable guest.

On the following morning, Dasharath headed by the priests and saints entered the sacrificial ground. Then in the auspicious moment called Vijaya, Ram appeared with saintly Vasistha and other sages accompanied by his brothers, adorned with various ornaments who had all performed the rites appertaining to the marriage.

Then Vasistha coming to Janaka informed him that King Dasharath, after performing the prenuptial rites was waiting at the gate with his sons. At this Vaideha said, "Who is at the gate that the King is waiting for his permission. He can easily enter his own house. O great sage! My daughters after performing all the auspicious rites pertaining to the marriage, are waiting at the foot of the altar like flames of fire, and I am expecting you at every moment. Now perform the ceremony without delay."

Dasharath, then, entered with his sons. And Vasistha spoke to Videha, "O master, now perform the marriage ceremony of Ram, the darling of all." Then Vasistha with Satananda and Viswamitra constructed an altar according to the injunctions of the Shastras. It was decked all round with scented flowers; and painted waterpots, with ears of barley attached to them, golden ladles, sprays, cups, and censors with incense burning in them, conches, spoons, wreathes, vases, Arghyas, fried paddy and akshatas dyed with turmeric juice, were arranged round the dias. Vasistha with mantras spread Durvas

(grass) of equal length on the altar. Then he duly lighted the sacrificial fire and made offerings to it. Then bringing Sita richly adorned with ornaments and jewels and placing her before Ram and the sacrificial fire, King Janaka said, "O Ram! Sita is my daughter and from this day she becomes your partner in life. Take her by the hand; good will betide you. Let her be chaste and devoted, and she will follow you like your own shadow." Saying this, Janaka spread holy waters sanctified by mantras into Ram's hand. The Gods and saints praised the union. Kettle drums began to be played and flowers were profusely showered.

After conferring Sita on Ram, addressing Lakshman Janaka said, "Come forward, O Lakshman, accept Urmila and take her by the hand." Then addressing Bharata, Janaka said, "O Bharata, you accept Mandavi" and to Satrughna said, "You take Srutakirti. Do not delay but be united with your wives."

Then the four sons of Dasharath taking the hands of the four brides in their own, went round the sacrificial fire on the altar, King Janaka and other saints. The marriage ceremony was thus performed. Heavenly music was heard from above and flowers were showered from the sky. Then Dasharatha's sons went round the fire three times and afterwards with their wives retired to their camps.

On the following morning, saint Viswamitra after greeting Dasharatha and Janaka repaired to the

Himalayas. King Dasharatha, too, made arrangements for returning to Ayodhya. King Janaka then gave many thousand cows and a number of fine blankets, heaps of silken cloths, well adorned elephants, horses, infantry as guards of honour, and profuse gold, silver, pearls, ruby (corals) as dowries to his daughters. He also gave hundreds of servants and maids of honour to each of his daughters.

Then Dasharath with his sons and armies started for Ayodhya. After some time the birds began to utter fierce cries in the sky and the beasts on land began to proceed towards the south. At these ominous signs Dasharatha asked Vasistha what it indicated and his heart was trembling with dark apprehensions. Vasistha assured him that the cries of the birds were ominous but the direction in which the beasts were going was assuring of peace. When they were thus engaged in conversation suddenly a furious storm broke out, and it uprooted mighty trees by its violence. The sun was hid in utter darkness.

Nothing could be seen in that pitch darkness. Soldiers were blinded by a cloud of dust and began to stumble on the ground.*

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* The original passage when translated literally runs thus:—Ashes raised by the force of the wind covered the troops and they began to drop down unconscious on the ground. But here "ashes" apparently means "dust' raised by the storm. "Began to drop down unconscious

At that hour only saint Vasistha and other sages, and King Dasharath with his sons retained their composure.

At that moment, the Destroyer of the Kshat-triayas, the son of Bhrigu, Jamadagni, with matted locks and axe on his shoulder, holding in his hands sharp arrows and a shining bow appeared on the spot like Byomkesh, the slayer of Tripura Asura. King Dasharath saw Jamadagni unassailable as the Kailas mountain, unbearable as the Doomsday-fire, burning with his own fire and incapable of being looked at by the unrighteous.

At his sight, Vasistha and other Brahmins talked amongst themselves, "Would the son of Bhrigu, enraged at the death of his father, again exterminate the Kshattriayas? Would he again be engaged in the act of destruction?"

The Rishis then greeted the son of Jamadagni with Arghyas and sweet words. Ram too accepted their offerings of worship.

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on the ground" in truth signifies began to stumble on the ground. If it is not ridiculous to think that the whole army fainted by a dust-storm, the sense of the passage, however, remains practically unaltered. Of course, we had not the fool-hardiness to omit or alter any miracle or supernatural thing because we have ceased to believe in it.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

RAM AND PARASHURAM

Parashuram then addressing Ram, the son of Dasharath, said, "I have heard of thy valour and also about the breaking of the bow. I have, therefore, come hither with another bow. First of all, give proof of your strength by fixing arrow to this formidable bow of my ancestors. If you succeed in that I shall then fight duel with you."

Then king Dasharath with a sad look said, "You are Brahman, your wrath has amply been gratified by destroying the Kshattriayas, so please do not threaten the boys. You are born in the virtuous line of the Bhargavas, given to the observance of vows and the study of the Vedas. You have renounced arms with a vow in presence of Indra, and adoptiug a life of renunciation you have conferred the Earth on Kashyapa, and retired to the Mahendra hill. Now have you come for my ruin, for if any untoward thing happens to Ram I shall surely die."

But without paying heed to Dasharath's words, the son of Jamadagni addressing Ram said,

These two formidable bows have been made by Vishwakarma with great care. One of the two at the time of the destruction of Tripura Asura, the Gods

gave it unto Tramvaka but, O Kakustha, you have snapped that into two. The second one was given to Vishnu.

Once upon a time the Gods wanted to ascertain who was more powerful between Vishnu and Siva, and with that intent they fomented a quarrel between the two. Then there took place a formidable contest between the two. Then Vishnu uttere a roar which rendered the bow of Siva quite soft and useless, and thereupon Mahadeva remained inert and listless.

Gods then acknowledged Vishnu as the more powerful of the two and they prayed for peace at which the contending Gods were pacified. Then Rudra made over the bow to Rajarshi Devarat of Videha. This bow of Vishnu was made over to Bhrigu's son Rishika and Rishaka gave it to my father Jamadagni. And when my father renounced that bow sinful Arjuna, the ruler of Haihai, killed my father. Hearing of this sad death of my father I destroyed the Kshattriyas in anger. Then after conquering the whole world, I gave it to Kashyapa as Dakshina* after the sacrifice. Having made this gift, I repaired to the Mahendra Hill but hearing of your snapping the Siva's bow, I have directed my steps hither. O Ram!

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* Dakshina—a priest's due who officiates in any sacrifice.

You are conversant with the code of Kshatttriya gallantry. You take this excellent bow and put on shafts to it and if you succeed I shall fight a duel with you."*

Hearing these words, Ram, on account of his father's presence, gently said, "O hero! I have heard of your heroic exploits to avenge your father's death.

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* Parashuram is said to be an incarnation of Vishnu. Ram was presumably so. But here we find one challenging the other to a fight. This conclusively proves that the Incarnation theory which is absent in the Vedas and the Upanishadas is a comparatively recent one. If perfection in humanity is divinity, then Ram Chandra is, of course, divine but it passes our poor power of comprehension how and why Parashuram—the murderer of his own mother—has been called an incarnation of God. All that we find praiseworthy in him was his valour. It is said that he destroyed the Kshattriyas for twenty-one times. Behind this story of carnage lurks the grim history of a dreadful conflict between the Brahmans and the Kshattriyas for supremacy. It is no wonder that in later Brahmanical mythology Parashuram, the upholder of their cause, came to be acknowledged as an incarnation of God! But here Brahman Ram yielded palm to Kshattriya Ram, though like every other great event of antiquity, it was attributed to a miracle. But there is hero-worship in every age and Parashuram too came to be regarded as an Avatar. Yes, an Avatar he was, of savage cruelty and vauniting orthodoxy.

Honourable revenge is worthy of a hero and so I acknowledge your valour. But I am a Kshattriya and you have insulted me by regarding me weak. I shall never brook this. Thou shall witness my prowess to-day."

Saying this Ram in anger took up Bhrigu's bow together with the arrows and then fixing a shaft in the bow addressing Jamadagni's son said, "You are a Brahman, and especially for Viswamitra you are an object of my respect. I, therefore, refrain from aiming this fatal shaft at you. Of the two alternatives—your aerial course, and the high state attained by your asceticism—tell me which one shall I destroy ?"

Seeing the bow in Ram's hand the celestials assembled in the sky to witness this wonderful trial of strength, and in their presence Jamadagni's power passed to Ram. At this, Jamadagni became powerless and kept steadily eying Ram.

Then Parashuram gently said, "When I gave away the Earth to Kashyapa, he told me no longer to remain in his dominions. According to those words, since then I have never spent a night on Earth. O Kakustha, therefore, you should not destroy my unrestrained power of locomotion. I shall now retire to the Mahendra Hill, you destroy with that arrow the regions I have acquired by my asceticism. The moment you have taken up the bow I have recognised you to be the Purushottam himself, the indestructible Vishnu. May good betide you. You

are matchless in the world, You are Lord of the three worlds. There is nothing to be ashamed of at my defeat in your hands. You withdraw that formidable shaft, and let me repair to the Mahendra Hill."

At these words, Ram shot the arrow and it destroyed the regions earned by Parashuram's austerities. The whole sky .then at once became clear. The celestials and saints praised Ram for his valour. Parasuram honoured Ram by going round him and then went towards the Mahendra Hill.

After Jamadagni's departure Ram made over the Vaishnavi bow to Varun, the Lord of waters, and addressing his father, stupefied with fear, said, "Father! Jamadagni is gone so let our army now march towards Ayodhya."

King Dasharath was greatly relieved at these words and he, embracing Ram in affection, smelt his head again and again, considered the whole thing as a second birth after death.

King Dasharath then reached Ayodhya with his army. The streets of Ayodhya were watered and decked with beautiful floral decorations and banners and flagstaffs, and began to be resounded with the notes of trumpets. Citizens were standing with auspicious things in their hands. There were immense crowds everywhere. Every face brightened at the sight of the King.

Then the citizens and the Brahmans flocked out of the city to receive the King and Dasharath entered his

favourite palace, snow-white as the Himayalas. Then the Queens, Kaushalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi with auspicious ceremonies received the brides clad in silk and sanctified by sacrificial fire. They took the brides inside the palace and made them bow to the household deities and to persons deserving respect.

After the auspicious rites and reception were over the brides retired to seclusion and enjoyed there the company of their husbands.

The sons of Dasharath then with their wives passed their days in the service of their father.

After some time, one day, King Dasharath said to Bharat that his maternal uncle Yudhajit had come there to take him to the place of the King Kekayas. At this Bharat together with Satrughna departed for their maternal uncle's house with Yudhajit.

After the departure of Bharat and Satrughna, Ram with utmost regard to the wishes of his father, discharged all the civil duties of the crown having always in his heart the welfare of the people ; and at his instance various good works were done to the public. Following the injunctions of the Sastras Ram observed all the duties due to his mothers and other superiors.

King Dasharath was exceedingly delighted at this conduct of Ram. The Brahmins, the merchants and other citizens grew particularly fond of him. Amongst the sons of Dasharath, truthful and mighty Ram was

the best, as the Self-create is the highest of all created beings.

Thus great Ram passed twelve years in happiness with Sita. He was intensely devoted to Sita and Sita too could not bear a moment's separation. Royal saint Janaka bestowed Janaki on Ram according to Brahma form of marriage* and Ram became greatly attached to her beauty and good qualities. Janaki was doubly devoted to Ram. Ram understood her heart and Janaki, beautiful as the goddess Lakshmi, also knew Ram's heart. As Vishnu, the Lord of the Gods looked happy and his grace was enhanced by receiving Kamala, so Ram looked more charming with extremely beautiful Sita.

THE END OF THE BALAKANDAM.

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* Manu mentions eight forms of marriage :—Brahma, Daiva, Arsha, Prajapatya, Gandharva, Asura, Rakshasa and Paishacha, the last four were disapproved forms of marriage. In Brahma marriage the bride is given to a bachelor versed in the Veda, who is to be sought out and invited by the bride's guardian to accept the bride offered to him.

AYODHYA KANDAM

THE RAMAYAN

AYODHYA KANDAM.

CHAPTER I.

THE HERO.

Bharat at the time of going to his maternal uncle's house took with him affectionate Satrughna, the self-possessed, and the ever-conqueror of his foes.* Having received paternal affection there they did not, however, forget their old father. Dasarath too could not forget them even for a moment. All the four sons were dear to him as four arms issuing from the same body; yet amongst the four eldest Ram was his most favourite. Ram too was foremost of the four in all accomplishments.

Ram was Vishnu himself incarnate on earth for the destruction of Ravan. Ram was peerless on

* The word Nitya Satrughna—has twofold meanings, first, the ever-conqueror of his senses; second, the ever-vanquisher of his foes. A man's senses are regarded as his enemies.

earth. He was highly beautiful and free from malice and was qualified like his father. He always addressed the people in gentle words and never used any hard expression even when rudely addressed. In the magnanimity of his heart he would forget hundreds of evils done to him but would gratefully remember even a single act of kindness ever shown. In the leisure of his martial exercises, he discussed Sastras with the wise and the aged people. If any body would approach him he would talk to him first. He was immensely powerful but never haughty for that. He was truthful, learned and always honoured the aged. Ram ministered to the welfare of his subjects, and the people too were deeply fond of him. He was friend of the poor, chastiser of the wicked, and well versed in religion and social customs and laws. He was worthy of his line and alway held the duties of a Kshattriya in high esteem. He never participated in profane and irreverent talks. Whenever questioned on any thing he answered them wisely like Vrihaspati, the preceptor of the Gods. He was young, healthy and virtuous, and was dear to the people like their another self. He mastered the Vedas and the Vedangas, and was skilful in the use of all arms, whether employed with *Mantras* or not. He was valiant, candid and the source of all good. He never spoke a lie even in utmost peril. He was modest, reserve and always respectful towards his superiors. He was never jubilant or angry just

for nothing. He sought no evil. He was free from all idleness and ever vigilant, and ever ready to scan his own faults. He knew the means of honestly amassing wealth, and also to distribute it to the deserving objects of charity. He punished or rewarded the people according to the strict rules of justice. He had aged and pious Brahmins for his guide. He was highly proficient in philosophy and poetry. He knew all the arts of enjoyments but never sought pleasure at the cost of morality. He was an expert rider, a great warrior, a valiant general who could successfully lead his army against his enemy and was conversant with all the military manouvres for that purpose. He was unconquerable even by the Gods. He was not given to carping, nor was a slave of time. In forbearnce he was like the Earth, in intelligence like Vrihaspati, and in powers like Indra. Thus accomplished Ram shone like the noon-day sun to the delight of his father and to the benefit of the people. Then the Earth desired excellent Ram as her lord.

Aged Dasarath wished to install such Ram on the throne and he was highly glad at the prospect of seeing his son on the throne. "Certainly he is more qualified than myself and dearer to the people than I am," thought the aged king.

CHAPTER II.

DASARATH'S WISH.

With the object of installing Ram on the throne King Dasarath one day told his counsellors, "I have grown old and I feel the infirmities of age in me. There are earthquakes, hurricanes, and much evil is portended by the planets and stars. For these reasons I have decided to install Ram on the throne, beautiful like the moon in its fullest glory and dear to the people. And I doubt not that the people will be greatly delighted at this."

Dasarath having decided this, resolved to celebrate the coronation ceremony. He, therefore, with the help of his ministers brought distinguished citizens and chiefs from different provinces, but did not send for Janak, the King of Mithila, nor for the King of Kekaya. He thought that they would approve the whole thing when they came to know of it.

Then, at Dasarath's call the obedient chiefs and princes began to pour in the Capital to pay homage to Dasarath. Dasarath then duly summoned them before him, and being seated on his throne and surrounded by the obedient princes, Dasarath looked like Indra encircled by the Gods.

Dasarath then addressing the august assembly said in a deep, resonant voice :

"My men and courtiers! You all know that my ancestors governed this vast kingdom like affectionate fathers. Now, I propose to contribute to the welfare of the people ruled by illustrious Ikshwaku and others. Following the path of my forefathers, I have so long tried to govern to the best of my ability being heedless of my personal gain. I have grown old under the shade of this white umbrella* I am far advanced in years, and I now yearn for rest."

"This heavy responsibility of Government is incapable of being borne even by saintly people, it requires a hero to shoulder such a burden ; and I have become quite fatigued under its pressing weight. With the permission of all the Brahmans present I intend to take rest by installing my son to the throne. My son, heroic Ram, has inherited all my qualities, nay more, he is like Indra in prowess. And I propose to invest the crown on virtuous Ram, shining like the moon with the constellation of Pushya. He is worthy of you in every respect, and the people of the triple world will find a worthy lord in him. I wish to do this good to the world even to-day.

"Now tell me whether my proposal meets with your approval or not ? If you think that it is due

* Insignia of royalty.

to my undue fondness for Ram, then advise me what is better, for arbitrators can discern the truth emerging from the discussions and friction of two opposing parties."

Dasarath stopped, and all the princes hailed his proposal in delight, as the peacocks hail the deep blue clouds in ecstatic joy, and from them rose loud murmurs of joy. The people shook the ground by their loud acclaim.

Then the Brahmins, military captains, the princes and the citizens consulted together and being unanimous in their approval addressing the king said,

"We know your age is now over some thousand years, and you have grown old. It is, therefore, proper for you to install Ram—the heir-apparent—on the throne. We all wish to see heroic Ram riding a huge elephant under the royal umbrella."

Dasarath then to know their minds said, "Your ready approval, however, raises my doubts. While I am still justly governing the world why do you want to see Ram installed on the throne ?"

Then the citizens and the chiefs replied, "Because your son possesses, good many noble qualities and let us recount them in your presence.

"Powerful and peerless Ram is like Indra, the king of Gods. He has thus cast into shade even his illustrious predecessors. He is the most truthful man on earth, and indeed the best of men. Virtue and wealth

are found blended only in him. He delights the people like the Moon ; in patience and forbearance is like the Earth, and in might like Indra himself. He is virtuous, true to his vows and free from envy. He always consoles the afflicted. He is forgiving, gentle, of sweet speech, and of grateful mind. He is beautiful and of subdued heart. He honours old and learned Brahmans. He is unparalelled on earth. He is well acquainted with the application of all the arms that are in use amongst the Gods and the giants (Asuras). He has mastered all knowledge and knows the Vedas with all their branches. He is highly proficient in music.* He is thoroughly honest and the receptacle of all good. He is never stricken with grief even there is sufficient cause for it. When occasions arise to fight for the defence of a city or village he never returns from the battle with Lakshman without conquering his foes. When he victoriously returns from the fight either on elephant or on horseback he never forgets in his triumph to enquire affectionately about the welfare of the people whom he meets in his way. He questions them, as one would do his son, everything concerning their children, wives,

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* Music though now much neglected, the ancient Hindus, like the Greeks, held it in high esteem, and it was considered as a necessary part of one's education, as is now looked upon in Europe and America.

servants, pupils and the sacrificial fire. He rejoices in the joy of the people and becomes sad in their sufferings as their fathers would have been.

"He has clung fast to religion. All his objects are noble and they always produce good results. When he talks, a smile always hovers on his lips. He has aversion against all sorts of quarrels. He can argue like Vrihaspati, the teacher of the Gods. From his graceful brows and large roseate eyes it seems as if Vishnu himself has incarnated on earth.* People love him for his heroic qualities. He is never elated with success. Not to speak of this kingdom, he can take charge of the whole world. Following the path of strict justice he never shrinks from passing death sentence to those who deserve it, but he never oppresses the innocent, rather rewards them profusely. By his magnanimity, Ram has become an object of reverence and love. Like the great Sun his presence is alweys felt by the people. O king! we, therefore, pray for the installation of Ram. In fact, like Marichi's son, Kashyapa, you have fortunately got such a highly

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* This line is significant. It seems that the writer of this portion looks upon Ram as an ideal man or the greatest of men. He as yet does not look upon Ram as an incarnation of Vishnu "It seems, as if," thus he accounts for the popular belief. (Vide introduction page VI).

accomplished son. Everybody in the kingdom, whether young or old, pray for Ram's health, his prosperity and longevity. Therefore, O King, for the benefit of all, invest the crown on Ram of delicate hue as of a dark blue lotus,"

CHAPTER III.

ROYAL DIRECTIONS.

Dasarath was mightily pleased at the conduct of his people and chiefs. Then King Dasarath said to Vamdeva, Vasistha and other Brahmins,

"The sacred month of Chaitra is come. The forests are adorned with blossoms and buds. Now you invest the crown on Ram."

At these words there were great shouts of joy.

Priest Vasistha then addressing the counsellors said, "By to-morrow have a sufficient supply of gold and gems. Collect in the sacrificial hall sacred medicinal herbs, wreaths of white flowers, fried rice, honey, clarified butter, each in a separate vessel, clothes fresh from the loom, fourfold forces, a lucky elephant, a pair of chowries, a chariot, arms, flagstaff, umbrella of pale yellow colour, golden pitchers, a bull with horns wrapped in gold, an entire tiger skin, and other necessary articles. Decorate the palace gate and the entrances to the city with garlands and sandal paste and burn fragrant incense at the gates. Have sufficient supply of food, consisting of curd, milk, clarified butter,

fried paddy, clean and good rice. Feed everyone sumptuously and pay the Brahmans handsomely. To-morrow, early in the morning, the Brahmans will pronounce their prayer, now invite them cordially. Set up flags everywhere. Water the streets of the city. Let well-adorned dancing girls wait in the second room of the palace. Keep food, flowers, incense and other articles of worship in temples and under sacred trees (Chaitya). Let stalwart warriors clad in armour and with long swords and shields enter the courtyard of the palace in proud march."

After giving these instructions, Vasistha and Vamdeva were engaged in priestly duties.

King Dasarath then asked Sumantra to fetch Ram in his presence.

The rulers of the North, South, East and West together with the Mlechha, Aryan princes and Mountain and Forest chiefs paid their homage to Dasarath.

Ram then entered the lofty palace, high as a peak of the Kailash to meet his father. On seeing Ram, Dasarath embraced him again and again. In the court a golden seat beset with gems was set apart for Ram. Dasarath asked Ram to sit upon that. Thereupon Ram took his seat. Then the throne glittered like the golden Sumeru, gilded by the morning rays of the Sun. As the Moon adorns the starry autumnal sky, so Ram enhanced the magnificence of the assembly by his graceful presence.

At the sight of his dear son, Dasarath was immensely glad as people are delighted in seeing their richly adorned images on the mirror.

Then Dasarath said to Ram,

"You are born of Kausalya, my first queen. You are highly qualified and I love you most. You are darling of the people. You ascend the throne when the Moon will enter the Pushya constellation. I know you are virtuous, yet let me give you some advice. Though you are modest but be more humble and control your senses. Always replenish your exchequer, arsenal and granaries, and by justice render yourself dear to the people."

The friends of a good ruler are delighted as the Gods are pleased with nectar.

Then the friends of Ram swiftly went to Kausalya and gave her this welcome news. Kausalya was immensely delighted at the news, and bestowed sufficient gold, gems and a number of cows to the bringers of this happy news.

Ram went back to his place after bowing profoundly at his father's feet.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PREMONITION

When the citizens were gone, King Dasarath said to his ministers,

"To-morrow, the Moon will enter the Pushya constellation, and I have decided to install lotus-eyed Ram on that day." Turning to Sumantra he said, "Again bring in Ram hither."

Sumantra then quickly went to Ram, and Ram asked about the reason of his coming, and on being told that the King wanted to see him again, Ram hastily went to the King.

After entering the palace, Ram seeing his father from distance bowed to him with clasped palms. King then raised him from the ground and after embracing him affectionately asked him to take his seat.

Dasarath then addressing Ram said, "O Ram! After long enjoyment of life I have grown old. I have been emancipated from my debts to the Gods, saints, ancestors, Brahmans and to the self. To-day, I make over to you the charge of my people. But I had a very evil dream, as if there were terrible thunders and meteors were shooting in the day. Astrologers were giving out that the Sun, Mars and the Rahu have encroached upon my star of birth. When such

inauspicious signs are seen, evil happens to the king, even death may occur to him. A man's mind is generally fickle. Therefore, you ascend the throne before there be any change in my mind. To-day, the Moon has entered the Punarvasu stars and it will enter the Pushya to-morrow. I have become eager to confer on you the crown, and I shall invest you with that to-morrow. Therefore pass the night lying on a bed of Kushagrass with my daughter-in-law Sita by observing fast and other sacred restrictions. There are many hindrances to a good act, so let your friends guard you this night. I wish to invest you with the crown during Bharat's absence, so that his mind may not be stained by envy. I know he is devoted to you, yet human mind is inconstant and undergo sudden changes when there is any cause for it. Even the hearts of the virtuous are changed and disturbed by envy, anger, malice and other strong passions. You now retire. To-morrow you will have to take charge of the kingdom."

Ram then went away and in order to inform Janaki about his father's behest Ram entered his room but missing Janaki there he went to the quarters of his mother.

By that time Kausalya having heard the news of Ram's installation to the throne, had entered the hall of worship with Sumitra, Sita and Lakshman, and there being tended by Sumitra, Lakshman, and Sita, she prayed to the Eternal Spirit. She was absorbed

in deep meditation with closed eyes and suspended breath. On arriving there Ram found his mother clad in silk and engaged in prayer for his welfare.

Then addressing his mother, Ram said, "Mother! Father has entrusted the kingdom to me and the coronation ceremony takes place to-morrow. He has asked me and Janaki to observe fast this night. You then arrange for all things that will be required for Janaki to-morrow."

Kausalya blessed Ram cheerfully "May you live long. May you conquer your enemies. May you prosper to the delight of the friends of mine and of Sumitra. I am fortunate that I bore thee in my womb. This day, all my supplications to Lord Hari have been fulfilled. Royal splendour will ever cling to thee."

Lakshman was seated there in clasped hands and casting his eyes on Lakshman, Ram said, "Lakshman, henceforward you will have to share the burden of the kingdom along with me. You are my second self. My life and kingdom are meant for you. So enjoy yourself as you like."

Thus after greeting Kausalya, Sumitra and Lakshman, Ram went to his quarters.

CHAPTER V.

THE JOY.

Dasarath asked priest Vasistha to give necessary directions to Ram and Sita. Saintly Vasistha then arrived at Ram's residence, it looked from distance like a mass of amber clouds. Ram respectfully received the saint. Vasistha initiated Ram and Janaki into fast by Mantras. Ram, after spending some time in company of his friends, with their permission entered his quarters which, at that time, with joyous faces looked like a lake with full blown lotuses, and resounding with the notes of joyous birds.

Vasistha on emerging from Ram's palace found the streets crowded with men. People were going in batches and there were constant shouts of joy, like the roaring of the sea. All the places were filled up to their utmost capacities. All the highways were swept and watered. Garlands hung on every gate and flags were streaming from every house. The whole city was anxiously waiting for the morning to witness the Coronation Ceremony. The city wore a gay, festive look.

Vasistha waded his way through that sea of human heads and entered the castle high as a moun-

tain peak (Himavat) and appeared before the king as Vrihaspati does before Indra.

The King stood up from the throne at Vasistha's sight. Vasistha then informed the King that all his directions had been carried out.

Dasarath then with Vasistha's permission entered the inner apartment as a lion enters his den in a mountain cave. Just as the moon shines in the midst of a galaxy of stars so Dasarath appeared in the midst of the pearl studded beauties of his palace.

When Vasistha was gone Ram took his bath and worshipped Narayan, and offered oblations with clarified butter into fire, and then partook its remainder. He then lay down in collected mind with Sita on a bed of grass within the precincts of that Vishnu's shrine.

When about two hours of night yet remained Ram left his bed and asked his men to decorate his house. At that time he was greeted by the chants and songs of the bards. He put on a silken dress and said his prayers to Narayan and had the Brahmans perform the Swastivachan rite. The whole city became resounded with the blares of trumpets and the deep voices of the Brahmans hailing the dawn.

All the citizens then rejoiced at the news that Ram had fasted with Janaki.

Then the citizens began to decorate the whole city. Flagstaffs with fluttering banners were raised from all temples high as the peaks and white as

the fleecy clouds. They were raised in every crossing and they streamed from every housetop, from every rich mansion, and from every shop full of merchandise ; and every tall, road-side tree and Chaitya were decorated with flags and ribbands, streets were decorated with floral wreathes and became fragrant with the sweet scent of incense. The people feasted their eyes and ears with songs and dancings performed by the musicians. Thinking that Ram might inspect the city at night, after his coronation, the people, by way of decoration, reared up lamp-posts in the shape of trees,* and they began to discuss about Ram's corona tion, even the children in groups when they were playing before their house-doors talked of that. People in knots were praising Dasarath for his noble decision in installing Ram on the throne. At last, Ayodhya, resembling like a heavenly city, became loud with the huzza and noise of the outsiders that began to pour in the city by that time.

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* A splendid form of illumination hardly surpassed even in our days.

from her person she sat down on the floor and said, "Oh Manthara! Either I shall die or shall install Bharat on the throne. I have no hankering for anything else, and I assure you that if the king invest the crown on Ram, I will put an end to my life."

Then Manthara said, "Surely along with your son you will have to rue if the kingdom goes to Ram. So try your level best to secure it for Bharat."

Thus being repeatedly provoked by Manthara, Kaikeyi by placing her hand on her agitated breast, said, "Manthara! If I die in this chamber of wrath you carry that news to the king, or you will hear that Ram has been sent to exile and Bharat has got the throne. If Ram does go to the forest, I have no more any need of luxury, nay, not even ot my life."

Kaikeyi after speaking out her mind in these cruel words lay down on the ground, like a fallen angel. Her beautiful face was dark with anger and her body being stripped of all ornaments appeared like the starless sky of a gloomy night. Thus Kaikeyi lay down with a smothered heart.

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CHAPTER VII.

IN THE CHAMBER OF WRATH.

In the chamber of wrath Kaikeyi then began to heave sighs like a panting snake. For sometime she thought over the prospect of her happiness and after deciding her course of action, she spoke it to Manthara, and her devoted maid was glad at this.

Queen Kaikeyi lay down with frowning brows and eyes red with anger. The ground being strewn with her garlands and ornaments (which she had cast off) shone like a bright starry firmament.

In the meantime king Dasarath after giving necessary directions for the installation of Ram entered the inner compartment of his palace. Thinking that Kaikeyi has not yet heard the gladsome news of Ram's coronation, he entered Kaikeyi's quarters to convey that happy news, as the moon unwittingly enters the white clouds in the sky rendered frightful by the presence of the Rahu* in them. Dasaratha saw hump-backed and other dwarfish women straying about hither and thither. At some parts of the palace parrots, peacocks, Kraunchas and swans were cackling

* The shadow of the earth that is cast upon the moon at the time of the eclipse was called Rahu.

"Go and soon inform the King of my arrival. Tell him that waters of the sea and of the Ganges have been brought in golden pitchers. Seat made of fig tree, all kinds of seeds, perfumes gems, honey, curds, clarified butter, fried paddy, Kushagrass, flowers, eight exceedingly beautiful maids, a formidable elephant, chariot yoked with four horses, sword, bow, carriage for the conveyance of man, white umbrella, white chowries, golden vase, a bull of pale yellow-colour with a big hump and bound by a golden chain, a mighty lion with four prominent teeth, a royal throne, tiger skin, sacrificial wood, fire, all kinds of musical instruments, well-adorned public women, Brahmins, Acharyas (teachers) cows and various kinds of sacred animals and birds have been collected. Prominent men of the town and provinces, and merchants with their servants have gathered. Chiefs and rulers from different quarters have been eagerly waiting to witness the coronation of Ram. Ask the King to be ready without delay so that Ram may be installed under the Pushya star."

At this, Sumantra proceeded .to the quarters of Dasarath. At that time, Sumantra did not know what in the meantime had happened to the King.

As usual he appeared before the King and greeted him with words of praise. He said, "You are the only object of our delight. As the sea tinged by the crimson rays of the dawn delights the eyes of the people so you delight us all. I awaken you as the Vedas,

and other sacred learning in yore awakened the self-create Lord of all for creation. As the sun and the moon in turn illumine the earth so let me enlighten today. Arise, O King, to-day is the coronation ceremony of Ram. Put on your wonderful apparel and issue from the palace like the blazing sun from the golden Sumeru hill. Everything has been made ready for the coronation ceremony and all are anxiously waiting for you. Without you we look like an army without its leader, like a flock of cattle without its keeper, so please come and give the necessary orders."

Hearing these words, Dasarath was again overwhelmed with grief and looking towards Sumantra with a dry, pale face said, "Sumantra, this eulogy of yours pains my heart the more."

At those words, and seeing the wretched look of the King, Sumantra stepped aside a little. Finding the King quite tongue-tied with sorrow, Kaikeyi said,

"Sumantra! The King kept up the whole night in joy for Ram's coronation. He has fallen asleep from shere exhaustion. So, please bring Ram hither,"

"How can I without the royal leave?" said Sumantra.

At this Dasarath said to Sumantra,

"Go, bring in Ram. I am anxious to see him."

Then Sumantra gladly went forth to fetch Ram when Kaikeyi added,

"Please bring the prince soon."

"Evidently the Queen is impatient to see the installation of Ram, and the King too is now awake, hence this hurry," thought Sumantra as he issued from the palace.

CHAPTER X.

RAM'S ARRIVAL.

Brahmins versed in the Vedas, counsellors, captains, royal priest Vasistha were all waiting at the gate.

They brought all articles for the installation ceremony. Not finding the King till then, they talked amongst themselves, "Who will inform the King of our arrival? The sun is up and we do not yet see the King."

While they were thus speaking, Sumantra met them and said that he was going to fetch Ram speedily before the King, and he again entered the sleeping chamber of the King and standing behind a curtain asked the King to rise up and meet the assembled people at the gate.

But Dasarath said, "Bring here Ram. What makes you to disobey my order? I am not asleep."

Hearing this Sumantra hurried from the palace. As he reached the public road he found it decorated with flags and flowers, and a joyous crowd collected there and talking about Ram.

Sumantra saw from distance the beautiful castle of Ram, lofty and white as a peak of the Kailash. Its doors were yet closed though the sun was up. Hundreds of daises were built about the palace and there

were several golden statues in front of the palace. Its gates were inlaid with various gems, and ornamented with wreaths of golden flowers and fine workmanship. Metallic images of tigers were kept here and there of the palace. The dazzling splendour of the palace never failed to attract public notice, and being sprinkled with Aguru and Sandal it was rich with fragrance like the Dardura Hill.*

The citizens were awaiting outside the gate with their offerings for the coronation ceremony. As soon as they saw Sumantra coming with a car, their minds leaped up in joy.

Sumantra then entered Ram's palace in a cheerful mind and saw various people engaged in performing auspicious rites for Ram. Many people by that time were collected and their shouts of joy filled the place with a loud noise. People clad in their best apparels were going to and fro greatly elated with joy,

Then Sumantra entered the peaceful chamber of Ram. It was guarded cautiously by faithful youngmen with arms, and old women clad in red cloth were seated with rattans in their hands. They all stood up at Sumantra's sight. Sumantra then asked the warders to inform Ram of his arrival.

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* Readers should mark here a picture of material prosperity of that time.

Sumantra was then ushered in before Ram. Ram was then dressed in an excellent apparel and was seated on a golden seat with a beautiful coverlet on it, like Kuvera, the God of wealth. His body was adorned with red sandal paste, and queen Janaki was seated by his side with a chowri in her hand and at that time Ram looked like the Moon in the company of star Chitra. Ram shone like the mid-day Sun in his great splendour. Sumantra with a profound bow said in clasped palms, "Prince! King Dasarath and Queen Kaikeyi desire to see you, so please come with me."

Ram cheerfully stood up and addressing Janaki, said, "My darling, father and mother Kaikeyi are certainly talking about my installation. That dark-eyed Queen is greatly devoted to the King, and she always wishes my welfare. It is, therefore, that she is making this hurry. Father will invest me with the crown to-day. Pass your time in pleasant tete-a-tete with your maids, I shall soon come back."

Ram said this respectfully to Janaki, and Janaki followed him up to the gate.

On reaching the gate Janaki said,

"As Brahma conferred the kingdom of heaven on Indra, so the King today will confer on you the kingdom after the investiture ceremony. I wish to see you put on a deer-skin and carrying the horn of an antelope in your hand after being initiated in the in-

vestiture ceremony. May Indra protect you on the east, Yama on the south, Varuna on the west, and Kuvera on the north !"

After the performance of the benedictory rites Ram proceeded with Sumantra. Issuing from his palace, as a lion from its lair, Ram saw Lakshman standing at the gate with clasped hands, and his friends collected in the inner·apartment. He greeted them with sweet words and then got upon a lòfty, golden chariot covered with tiger-skin, and drawn by strong horses like young elephants. By its dazzling glare it attracted the people's eyes. Being surrounded by a halo of glory Ram came out of his palace as the moon emerges from the dark blue clouds, and the chariot moved swiftly with a deep rumbling noise of a cloud. At that time Ram looked like a second Indra. Lakshman stood by Ram with a chowri in his hand. A number of elephants and horses followed the car. Music, shouts, and loud huzzas were then continually heard. Beautiful damsels clad in their best apparels stood by the windows and began to shower flowers on the head of Ram, while others standing on the ground-floor discussed things concerning Ram. Some said, Queen Kausalya has certainly been extremely delighted at Ram's coronation. Another said, "Sita is undoubtedly a gem of women. She had certainly practised great penance in her former birth or she would not have got such a husband, as Rohini got the Mooni as her lord."

At some other place. throngs of people were talking about the coronation.

Ram, at last, reached the highway crowded with people, horses, elephants, and lined with shops full of merchandise. Flags were streaming from both sides of the road. At places, pearls and crystals were arranged in heaps or in other artistic forms. Every place was perfumed with Aguru and Sandal and was tastefully decorated with red cloth. And the wide road was strewn with flowers, fried paddy, curd, clarified butter, dhupa, and such other articles of auspicious rites.

Friends of Ram were exceedingly glad at his sight and they said, "Your illustrious ancestors ruled with great ability, but we hope that people will be more happy under your rule. Nothing is more welcome to us than the news of your installation to the throne."

After leaving temples, chaityas, and junctions of the roads on his left, Ram entered his father's palace. After passing through three rooms guarded by archers and another two rooms, he went to meet his father. The crowd outside waited for his return, as the ocean for the rising of the moon.

CHAPTER XI.

THE INTERVIEW.

When Ram appeared King Dasarath was seated on a sofa with Kaikeyi. He looked quite miserable and sad. Ram bowed at the feet of his father and respectfully greeted Kaikeyi.

Dasarath then cast his eyes on Ram, and softly muttered, "Ram."

No sooner he uttered, "Ram" his eyes became wet with tears. He could no more look at Ram, nor he could speak with him.

Ram was greatly alarmed at this condition of the King. Dasarath was heaving deep sighs of pain, and looked like a tempest tossed ocean, or like the sun under eclipse. His glory was bedimmed like that of an ascetic speaking falsehood.

Ram seeing this unexpected sorrow of his father grew restless like a sea.

He asked to himself, "Why does he not look cheerful at my sight as he was wont in the past?"

Ram then sorrowfully turned to Kaikeyi and said,

"Mother, tell me, have I committed any offence through ignorance for which father is angry with me? You please propitiate his anger and ask him to forgive me. He is ever affectionate to me, then

why does he look so miserable to-day ? Why does he not talk to me ? Is he suffering from any physical or mental illness ? Is it all well with my other mothers ? I donot wish to live even for a moment by causing anger or dissatisfaction in my father's heart. Father is God himself, from whom one derives his being. Mother ! Have you said any hard words to him in your sullen mood ? I am anxious to learn the truth. Please tell me why he has been overwhelmed with unforseen sorrow ?"

At this, shameless Kaikeyi said, "Oh, Ram ! The King is not angry, nor anything very particular has befallen him, but he can not speak out his mind out of your fear. You are his most beloved son and he is unable to utter any unpleasant thing to you. But you ought to carry out what he has promised to me. Formerly, he had promised me two boons but now he repents like a common person because I have now asked for them. It is not unknown to honest people that truth is the root of all religion. Just see that the King may not violate truth for you being angry with me. If you agree to carry out without questioning what he may ask you to do then I can tell you everything. The King himself will tell you all, but if you respectfully observe what I may speak on behalf of the King, then I can tell everything."

Hearing this Ram began with a sorrowful heart,

"Mother, don't talk to me like this. At the mere words of the King I can enter into fire and drink

poison. He is King, father and preceptor. I swear that I shall carry out what you ask me to do. Now tell me the desire of the King. Please know, that Ram never swerves, from his words."

Then wicked Kaikeyi cruelly returned,

"Formerly in a fight between the Gods and the demons your father received wounds all over the body. It was I who saved his life by nursing him day and night. For this he promised me two boons. I do now ask for them, and I have asked for Bharat's installation and your exile into Dandakaranya forest. My boy, if you be truthful and have slightest regard for your father's promise, then you listen to my words, and fulfil your father's promise. This very day you give up your idea of installation and repair to the forest for fourteen years with matted locks and wearing bark, and Bharat will be installed with those very articles procured for your coronation. Let him rule over Ayodhya. This is my desire, This is why the King being overwhelmed with sorrow is unable to look at your face. You, therefore, carry out the King's words and redeem him from his promise."

Magnanimous Ram was not a bit pained at these cruel words. It was Dasarath alone who was being distressed at the prospect of the separation with his beloved son.

Ram then calmly replied, "Very good, I shall from this place proceed direct to the forest. But I am eager

to know why the King is not talking to me as he used to do in the past. Be not angy, mother, I swear to you that I shall repair to the forest as desired. What can I not ungrudgingly perform when ordered by my father and the King? I am only sorry that the King has not himself spoken anything about the installation of Bharat. Not to speak of the royal command, for your benefit and father's pledge I can cheerfully bestow the kingdom and my everything on Bharat. I can even give away Sita. I find the King feeling diffident and shy, please assure him.

"Why he has fixed his look on the ground, and is shedding silent tears? Even to-day envoys on swift horses will be sent to Bharat to fetch him from his maternal uncle's house, and I shall repair to the Dandaka forest for fourteen years in an unwavering mind."

Kaikeyi was delighted at these words and she urged on Ram saying, "Let messengers be immediately sent to Bharat. It is not proper for you to delay any further, soon leave for the forest. The King does not speak to you from shame. Remove his miseries now. Unless you depart from his presence he won't have his food or bath."

"O Shame! What a pity!". With these words Dasarath fainted on the golden sofa.

Raising up the King, Ram hurried about his departure to the forest as a horse spurred by a whip.

Ram then gently said to Kaikeyi,

"O Venerable lady! I donot wish to live a selfish life. I love religion like a Rishi, and there is no greater religion than to serve one's father and to carry out his orders. I can sacrifice my life for the satisfaction of my father. Now, I shall live for fourteen years in the forest just for your wish, even without the orders of the King. Since you have every authority on me and requested the King about this, it is apparent that nothing of me is unknown to you, I shall even now leave for the forest after taking mother's permission and consoling Sita.

"Now please see to Bharat's installation and to my father's comfort. Serving the father is the highest duty of the son."

At these words Dasarath's sorrow was doubly increased, and being unable to speak he began to cry aloud. Then Ram after bowing at the feet of his father and Kaikei, and after going round the two out of respect he came out of the chamber.

Heroic Lakshman having overheard everything was beside himself in rage and followed Ram with tearful eyes. Ram never cast his eyes towards the place full of articles for his installation. He was by nature beautiful, so the loss of the kingdom could not affect the beauty of his face as the waning of the moon does not rob it of its beauty.

There was no change in him for leaving aside the royal umbrella and his friends and relations. No body could see any mark of sorrow on his countenance.

As the moon never shades his lustre so his natural cheerfulness did not leave him. Ram entered the inner quarters of the palace to convey this unpleasant news to his mother. At that time Kausalya was engaged in various festive ceremonies about the installation of Ram. Ram bore everything calmly but he was troubled by the thought that his parents might die for his separation from them.

CHAPTER XII.

THE FATAL NEWS.

At last the news of his exile and the loss of kingdom spread in the inner sections of the palace, and the queens and other royal dames began to lament bitterly saying that who used to serve them even without his father's direction, who looked upon them as his mothers, who never grew angry when abused, who had sweet words for all and tried to please everybody, alas, that Ram was going to the forest. King Dasaratha were a fool or he would not have forsaken such a son.

Ram heaved deep sighs at these lamentations of the women and at last reached his mother's quarters in front of which many were seated. They blessed Ram as soon as he arrived there. After passing through different apartments he came to his mother's chamber, where his arrival was announced to Kausalya by some women.

At that time Kausalaya was worshipping Vishnu for the welfare of his son. Ram saw there grains, sweetmeats, clarified butter, garlands of white flowers, fried paddy, payasa (rice boiled with sugar and milk), sesamum, peas, sacrificial fuels, filled up pitchers and other articles for offering oblations.

At the sight of Ram Kausalya came near him and Ram bowed to her feet. She hugged Ram to her bosom and smelt his head out of deep affection. Kausalya said, "The King is true to his words and he will confer on you the crown to-day." Saying these she offered Ram a seat and asked him to partake something.

Ram then in clasped palms said, "Mother, you know not what great calamity is impending on you, Janaki and Lakshman. I do not require such seat anymore for I am just now bound for the forest. I shall start for the Dandakaranya immediately and there shall live for fourteen years on fruits and roots. Father has ordered my exile and Bharat's installation."

Hearing this Kausalya fainted on the ground like a tree felled by an axe. She never suffered in life. Ram quickly raised her from the ground and brushed off the dust from her body.

Kausalya then with great difficulty said, "Oh Ram, if you were not born to-day, I would have been a sonless woman but not subject to severe sorrow as this. My only grief would have been my barrenness. I have never received any caress of my husband but bore everything patiently with the hope that all my sorrows would be over by the birth of a son. But, alas, I shall now have to bear slight and insult of my co-wives and nothing

is more painful to woman than to bear the gibes of co-wives. I do not find a more wretched creature than myself. I know not what will happen after your departure to the forest. Knowing that my husband is averse to me even the maids of Kaikeyi will not spare to insult me. And Kaikeyi is always in fretful temper. Seventeen years* have passed after your investiture of sacred thread. All these years I have passed in deluding hopes. I shall not be able to bear such intense sorrow. All my efforts have been in vain. My heart is now over-flooded with sorrow as a stream during the rains. I am really wretched, for death will not take me to its dreadful abode. My heart seems to be made of steel or it would have broken when I fell down by hearing the painful news. It is apparent death never comes before its due hour. What more charm I have in my life? I shall follow you to the forest as the cow follows its calf. All my prayers to the Gods for my son's welfare have been fruitless like seeds thrown into a barren soil." Kausalya was thus crying bitterly when Lakshman tried to console her with fitting words,

"O, reverend lady! It is not proper that Ram should renounce the throne and go into exile. The King has grown perverse and old. He is uxorious and is completely under the influence of a woman.

* By this calculation Ram was then 27 or 26 years old.

For what offence Ram should be banished from the kingdom? I have not come across any body even amongst his enemies who can speak about his fault. He is faultless, mighty and without any greed. He has love even for his enemies. Who can forsake such a son? The King it seems has become indiscreet like a child. What son will obey his words considering the conduct of the previous Kings? O worshipful one, before the people come to know the news of your exile, secure the kingdom with my help. Who can prevent your installation when I shall be by your side with my bow and arrows like unto Death itself. If I see any indication of any disturbance I shall put to death every one of Ayodhya. I shall surely kill him to-day who will take up Bharat's side.

"Know it for certain that gentleness is the cause of defeat or discomfiture. What shall I say more, if father being incited by Kaikeyi stands in the way I shall not hesitate even to kill him. It is proper to chastise even the spiritual guide if he loses his judgment and be vain. By seniority of birth the kingdom belongs to you, then for what reason or precedent he can deprive you of the throne? I tell you openly that no body will succeed in installing Bharat by opposing you and me.

"I love Ram with all my heart, and I swear by my bow and all that is dear to me, that if Ram enters into fire or into the forest I shall be the

first to thrust myself there. I shall remove your difficulties by my prowess as the sun dispels all darkness. Yourself and worshipful Ram will witness my prowess. I shall even now kill that old father addicted to Kaikeyi and who has grown foolish like a child inspite of age."

Hearing these words of heroic Lakshman, Kausalya with tearful eyes addressing Ram said,

"You have heard what Lakshman has just now said. If you approve of it, act accordingly. You should not leave your mother in distress by listening to the unjust words of her co-wife Kaikeyi. If you are anxious for righteousness you will be able to acquire immense virtue by serving me by stopping at home. The great sage Kashyapa attained heaven by serving his mother, remaining at home. In point of respect and veneration, I am adorable to you as the King himself. I shall never permit you to go to the forest. I would prefer to live on mere grass* with you. I do not wish for happiness nor want to live in your absence. If you leave me in such distressing sorrow I shall give up my life, by observing the vow of fast, then you shall suffer for the sin of inflicting agonies on your mother, as the God Ocean was subjected to the torments of hell for inflicting pain on his mother." Hearing his mother speaking thus Ram gently returned,

"Mother! It is beyond my power to disobey

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* Poor vegetable diet.

my father's orders. I entreat you by your feet, please permit me to repair to the forest. Formerly, Rishi Kundu killed a cow at the words of his father though he knew it to be a sin. In our line, the sons of Sagar dug the earth at the command of their father. Ram, the son of Jamadagni, at the words of his father decapitated his mother by the stroke of an axe in the forest. I am only following the examples of these great men. Mother, it is one's duty to obey his father. Please do not consider it impious. One does not lose his merit by obeying his father."

Then turning to Lakshman magnanimons Ram said,

"Lakshman! I know you love me deeply. I am also aware of your valour and irresistible might. Mother is overwhelmed with grief at the news of my exile. But religion is the highest thing in the world, and that religion is based on truth. The behest of my father appertains to that truth. So when I have got the permission and order of my father and of mother Kaikeyi I can not desist from proceeding to the forest. I therefore ask you to give up this mean Kshatriya* vanity. Please follow my words."

Ram again turned to his mother and said in clasped hands,

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* The word has one *t* but the printer's devil must have two, perhaps by doubling the alaphabet he wants to lay more

"O, worshipful lady ! Allow me to proceed to the forest. I entreat you, not stand in my way. I shall again come back home being absolved from the vow, as Yayati returned from the heaven. Yourself, myself, Janaki, Lakshman and mother Sumitra

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emphasis upon Kshatriya valour. It is difficult to get rid of him. He is quite incorrigible even when corrections have been made ; viz., Instead of Ecce Homo it has been done Ecco Home in page VI ; instead of 'indelible marks' it has the scored through 'the' still attached to it. Sometimes, of course, inaccuracies creep into print, as in spelling, but that affects an educated reader the least, he corrects it then and there (as he will do 'hypersensative' in page IX into hypresensitive, or, 'yoge yoge' into yuge yuge (in page IV) nay more, he will even supply here and there an "and" or "an article" dropped down at the time of compressing the galley at the time of printing ; viz . 'vanquished, brought over' in page 29 should have an 'and' between them ; and in page 60. Having heard Visvamitra should have 'this' before Visvamitra. This is annoying nodoubt, but it is difficult to avoid it wholly in a big work like this with our means, especially when the writer is unable to go through the proofs on account of his weak sight. The translator, therefore, deeply apologises to the public and appeals to their magnanimity to excuse something in the name of the rescuscitation of our great classics, for which the book has evidently been published. A corrigenda will however be added at the end, though the educated reader can do without it.

should do what the King asks us to do. Now grieve no more, desist from the rites of installation, and follow what is right."

When Ram said all these in an undisturbed heart, Kausalya fixed her gaze on Ram and said,

"My boy, I have reared you up with affection and love, and like the King I am equally adorable to you. How can you leave me then? It is better to renounce everything else but you."

Ram grew indignant at these words and he, abiding in righteousness, seeing his mother almost senseless in grief, and Lakshman too overwhelmed with sorrow, addressed them with words worthy of him,

"Lakshman I am fully aware of your valour and of your deep attachment for me. But I ask you again and again not to put me into greater pain by siding along with the mother, failing to understand my motive."

"When the time comes for reaping the fruits of acts done in a prior life, righteousness, wealth and objects of desire are obtained, so the act that secures all these three is most desirable like a loving and obedient wife with issue. But the performance of an act which is not conducive to virtue is not good. One should act what leads to righteousness. He who grows selfish by neglecting righteousness becomes an object of public derision. And any desire that goes against righteousness

cannot be regarded as commendable or right. Our aged father is our preceptor in arms as well as in other things. Who having any regard for righteousness will not obey his orders, though they may be given from anger, joy or lust? For this I can not act against my father's vow. The King is our father and he has fullest authority over us. The King is still alive and he is ready to observe truth even by forsaking his son. In these circumstances, mother, like any other helpless woman, may accompany me if she likes. Let her, therefore, permit me to repair to the forest and bless me, so that I may come back after staying the period of vow. I can not sacrifice good name for a kingdom. Life is not everlasting, so I would not wish to acquire even the world by any unjust means."

Thus saying the foremost of man, Ram, thought of leaving the place by consoling his mother.

But Lakshman brooding over Ram's exile and his loss of the Kingdom was overwhelmed with grief. His eyes expanded in anger and he looked like an infuriated elephant.

Gentle Ram then addressing him said, "Now do not cherish any anger, sorrow, or insult in your heart. Do away patiently and cheerfully with all the preparations that have been made for the investiture ceremony but make preparations for my repairing to the forest."

"Act in such a manner that mother Kaikeyi may

be assured who was greatly alarmed at the news of my installation. I can not overlook the sorrow that has been caused in her mind from the apprehension of mischief to her. I don't remember to have ever offended my father or mother. Father is truthful and true to his vows. He has been greatly alarmed by the thought of the next world, let all his fears be removed. If I do not so act father will be sorry when he will find that his promise has not been fulfilled, and his sorrows will greatly pain my heart. It is for this that I intend to leave the city immediately renouncing the throne. In my departure Kaikeyi will aehieve her object and will safely install Bharat on the throne. She will be able to live happily after my exile to the forest. He who has inspired Kaikeyi with this desire has also kept her firm in her determination. I can not offend the worshipful lady in any way. I shall immediately proceed to the forest. Fate is responsible for this loss of kingdom and my banishment. It is due to fate that Kaikeyi has been so prejudiced against me, or she would not have been so intent on inflicting miseries on me. You know I have never made any invidious distinction between the mothers. Kaikeyi too never made any difference between myself and Bharat. It is, therefore, nothing but destiny that has made her cruelly to press for my banishment. Kaikeyi is an accomplished, good-natured lady. Why should she at all use unpleasant

words before her husband unless goaded by fate? What is beyond comprehension or unthinkable is Destiny. Rulers of created beings, even Brahma and other Gods, can not over-ride fate. It is this inexorable fate that has brought about change in Kaikeyi's mind and my loss of kingdom. Who dares stand against destiny known to us only through its consequences, but otherwise unknown? Destiny is the mysterieus root-cause of all happiness, sorrow, fear, anger, loss, gain, subjection and deliverance. It is due to destiny that great ascetics sometimes succumb to passion or anger. It is only for destiny, works already begun are suddenly interrupted and unforeseen events follow."

"Lakshman! If you can now console yourself with this thought for this interuption to the installation you will hardly have any cause for regret. Cast off your sorrow by following my advice and dissuade others to take any part in my installation. Water brought for my coronation will do the bathing ceremony necessary for being initiated to the vow of asceticism. Nay, I must not look to these things. I shall myself draw water from a well and take my bath for my initiation to forest-life."

"Don't be sorry, brother, because I could not secure the throne. Of kingdom and forest I would prefer the last. Now you see how powerful is destiny. You shouldn't, therefore, any more blame younger mother and father smitten by fate."

CHAPTER XIII.

LAKSHMAN'S REPLY.

Ram having said this, Lakshman was suddenly placed between grief and joy. He thought for some time with a downcast look and then knitting his brows in a frown, began to breathe hard like a panting snake. At that time it was hard to look at his face which grew terrible like that of an angry lion. Then after throwing his arms, as an elephant does its trunk, with a shrug of his shoulders and looking at askance returned :

"Arya ! You have been eager to go to the forest for two reasons—to avoid transgression of virtue and to set your example before the people to enable them stick to their honour. But you are labouring under a delusion. Had it not been so you would not have spoken like this. You can easily overcome your fate, then why do you sing hymns of praise to worthless and wretched Destiny ? The King and Queen Kaikeyi are highly vicious, how can't you then be sure about their viciousness ? Don't you know that many people only feign righteousness ? Look ! How the King and Kaikeyi for selfish motives are deceitfully forsaking a son like you ! If their intentions were not to cheat you by fraud they would not have set up obstacles after making preparations for the installation."

"If this story of the promised boons were true why it was not given out before the preparation made for the installation. It is, however, highly unjust to install the younger by overriding the elder. I can't brook this heinous affair. You will kindly forgive me what I may say from sorrow. I hate that religion that has fascinated you so much and produced this vacillation. You are capable of action, then why should you obey the words of the uxurious King? Promising of boons is a mere plea to thwart your installation. But my great sorrow is that you do not admit it to be such. This virtuous tendency in you is certainly reprehensible. People will speak ill of you if you repair to the forest leaving the kingdom for without any just cause."

"The King and Kaiyeyi always try to do mischief to us. Nobody except you is willing to carry out their wishes. They have put obstacles to your installation, but you consider it to be fate. I entreat you to give up this evil faith. Such destiny does not commend to me. Who are weak and powerless follow destiny, but who are heroes and whose valour is praised by the people, never pay any heed to destiny. He who can conquer fate by his manliness is never cast down by sufferings or loss. Aryya, today the world will witness the prowess of both manliness and fate. Those who find your installation thwarted by fate will see that fate defeated by my manliness. To-day, I shall assail

fate like an unrestrained infuriated elephant and conquer it by my might. Not to speak of King Dasarath alone, but even the whole world wont be able to prevent your installation. I shall send them to the forest for 14 years who has sanctioned your exile. I shall root out the hope of the King and Kaikeyi for the installation of Bharat at your cost. Surely destiny will not bring that amount of happiness to him who will stand against me, as the miseries to be inflicted by my unbearable might."

"Oh, Aryya, if you repair to the forest after thousand years, your sons will then occupy the throne. It is desirable to retire into solitude by following the examples of the former Kings, by making over the kingdom to his son when he is capable of governing the people as his own children. Don't refuse the throne fearing that you may lose it again for the fickleness of the King. I swear to protect your kingdom or I may not attain the region of the heroes after death. I shall guard your throne as the shore guards the sea. Now get yourself initiated with auspicious rites. If the princes and rulers stand in the way I shall alone be able to subdue them. These arms of mine are not intended only to contribute to the beauty of my person, this bow is not meant for an ornament, this sword and shafts are not meant for felling and carrying woods, Don't think it to be so. These four are meant for

the destruction of enemies. If Indra, the carrier of thunderbolt, now stands against me I shall hack him to pieces by this sword flaming like the lightning. Who will be able to resist me when I shall appear on the field with bow in hand and putting on the glove of lizard skin for the protection of fingers? My shafts will pierce through the vital parts of men, elephants and horses. I shall display my feats of arms for destroying the supremacy of the King and for establishing that of mine. The hands that are besmeared with sandal paste, wear bracelets, distribute wealth and maintain friends and relations, will perform deeds worthy of them, by suppresing all those who wanted to put obstacles to your installation. Now tell me which of your enemy will be severed from his life, wealth and friends? I am your servant, just order me and I shall try to to bring the whole world uuder your sway."

Hearing these words of Lakshman, Ram the chief of the descendants of Raghu, consoled him again and again and by repeatedly wiping off tears from Lakshman's eyes said,

"I think the best course for me is to obey my father's orders."

Then Queen Kausalya finding Ram bent upon to carry out his father's wishes, said with a voice choked with tears,

"Alas! How shall he who is born of the King and of me live on medicancy? Certainly, Destiny

is all-powerful or why should Ram be sent into exile ?"

"My boy ! As fire in the summer burns all trees and plants so this flame of sorrow is consuming my heart ; your absence will fan that flame ; miseries are its fuels, tears are its oblations, and the vapour of cloudy thoughts is its smoke. I shall follow you wherever you may go, as the cow follows its calf."

The foremost of men, Ram, hearing his afflicted mother speaking thus, said,

"Mother ! The King has already been duped and put into great miseries by Kaikeyi. I am now going to the forest and if you accompany me the King will surely die."

"There is nothing more cruel for a woman than to desert her husband. Don't entertain this odious thought. You should serve him so long father lives. This is your duty !"

At this Kausalya of auspicious look gratefully said,

"To attend upon and to serve one's husband is no doubt the highest duty of a woman."

Virtuous Ram finding his mother approving his words, said, "Mother ! The King is your husband and my father—the foremost object of reverence ; besides he is the master of all and it is mine as well as your duty to carry out his words. And I assure you that I shall come back after fourteen years."

Affectionate Kausalya sorrowfully replied, "I shall not be able to live amongst the co-wives in your absence. If the King has ordered your exile to the forest take me also along with you."

Thus saying Kausalya began to cry bitterly, But Ram being unmoved said,

"So long a woman lives her husband is her only master. The King can, therefore, treat with us in any way he likes. Bharat is virtuous and of sweet speech; he will surely try to please you in every possible way. Now please see that the King may not be overwhelmed with sorrow in my absence. My absence will be unbearable to him, please see that nothing fatal happens to him. It is your duty to minister to the aged King. The woman who does not serve her husband even though engaged in fasts and other religious rites shall fare badly in the next world, but one attains heaven by serving her husband. Even to her who does not feel inclined to worship or bow to the Gods the best thing is to serve her husband. This is the duty of a woman as prescribed by the Vedas and the Smritis. Dost thou now in expectation of my return pass your time by doing religions acts. After my return you will reap its fruits if the King survives."

Being thus consoled by Ram Kausalya said with tears, "Since you have so resolved it is beyond by power to dissuade you. Perhaps it is impossible to avoid the inevitable separation. Good betide you. All

my miseries will be over when you come back, it is destiny that is sending you to forest without caring for my entreaties. Go, but come back safely. Heaven knows whether I shall ever witness your return."

CHAPTER XIV.

KAUSALYA'S LEAVE.

Kausalya then subduing her sorrows performed several rites for the welfare of Ram. Then addressing Ram, she said, "You go now, but please return soon. Let virtue, which you have so cheerfully decided to follow, protect you ; let the gods, whom you everyday adore protect you in the forest ; let the weapons of wise Visvamitra defend you ; may you be protected by your devotion to truth and to your parents ; may the sacred fuel, sacrificial grass, holy altars, mountains, trees, lakes, birds, snakes and lions protect you. Let Sidhvas, Visvadevas, Maruta, ascetics, Pusa, Bhaga, Aryama, the Lokapalas* six seasons, months, days, nights, Srutis, Smritis, Skanda, Soma, Vrihaspati, Saptarshi, Narada and others protect you. When you will go to the forest, may Heaven, Sky, Earth, Air, movable and immovable things with their presiding deities protect you there. Cruel Rakshashas and Pichasas live in the forest. Let not monkeys, scorpions, reptiles, insects, elephants, tigers, bears, hogs, buffalos do you any injury. May no cannibal

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* Rulers of various regions. Pusa = sun , Bhaga = moon ; Aryama = spirit of the ancestors. Madhuparka = a cup containing curd, clarified butter and honey.

hurt you for my prayers; may Sukra, Soma, Surya, Kuvera, Yama, Agni, Dhuma and mantras uttered by Rishis, and the lord of creaton protect you."

Large eyed Kausalya then began to worship the gods with perfumes and garlands of flowers, and for the well-being of Ram, she got the Brahmins to offer oblations to the fire. After the offering of oblations she gave the Brahmins Madhuparka and they uttered blessings on Ram.

Then Kausalya blessed Ram saying, "May that blessing betide you which in the days of yore crowned Indra at the destruction of Vitra." Thus saying Kausalya blessed Ram by placing grains on his head, besmeared his body with fragrant substance and by uttering mantras she tied in his hands well tested amulets and a twig of auspicious 'Visailya Karani'.

She embraced Ram again and said in a faltering voice, choked with tears, 'You may now go where you like; I shall be glad to see you coming back after attaining your object in healthy body and my prayers protect you."

Ram then bowed to his mother and after going round her left the place for Janaki's quarters.

All my mothers used to love me and feed me equally and you should bow to them every day. You should look upon dear Bharat and Satrughna as your sons. Bharat is now the lord of our family and the kingdom ; don't injure him in anyway. Kings are propitiated by devotion and service, but become angry if any thing occurs on the contrary. I therefore ask you to live here following Bharat's wishes and commands. I am now going to the forest and my request to you that you should not neglect any of my aforesaid words."

Then sweet-tongued Janaki replied with an offended air, "Why do you think me so mean that you speak thus ? It is difficult to restrain laughter at your words. Your words are unworthy of a hero versed in the sacred lore. They are infamous. To speak the truth it is not proper to listen to them.

"My Lord ! Father, mother, son, brother, daughter in-law, all of them reap the consequences of their own acts, it is wife alone that shares in the fate of her husband. When you have been ordered to go in exile to the Dandaka forest, my banishment too has infact been ordained. Not to speak of other relations, a woman can not alone save herself, husband is her main-stay in this world as well as in the next. A woman should always take shelter at the feet of her husband though she may be deprived of heaven-like lofty position. Father and mother have advised me to follow the husband in prosperity as well as in adversity. If you repair to the forest, I

shall go in front of you and make path by treading the thorns under my feet. Don't be angry that I could not comply with your request. Take me with you as the travellers take the remnants of their drink along with them. I have committed no such offence to you that you want to leave me here. I do not care for all the wealth of the world but your company. You must not protest against what I wish to do in this matter.

"My Lord, I have been eager to serve you like a nun in the forest, inhabited by tigers and deers, and rendered perfumed by the sweet fragrance of flowers. I desire to bathe every day in lakes and pools strewn with full-blown lotuses and rendered vocal by the notes of swans and other aquatic birds. I shall tend you in the deep forest full of wild animals and carry out your wishes as I would do in my father's house. I shall without any fear visit the mountains, lakes and other wild sceneries with you. I know you will be able to maintain me even in the forest. Not to speak of me, you are capable of shouldering the burden of an unlimited number, I shall not therefore leave your company, nor you will be able to dissuade me anyhow. I shall go ahead of you and when hungry shall feed upon wild roots and fruits, and shall never trouble you for better food. I shall feel no sorrow in thus passing long time with you."

"My Lord, I am fully resolved, if you leave me

will secure the kingdom there will be no end of miseries to the co-wives. And Bharat after his installation will side with his mother, and he will never think about Kausalya and Sumitra.* This is why I ask you to remain here somehow and maintain them. Great merit is acquired by serving the superiors ; you, therefore, take charge of my mother on my behalf. If we all leave her thus she can't be happy by any means."

Lakshman then humbly returned, "O hero, Bharat will maintain Kausalya and Sumitra from fear of you. I shall surely kill him if he slights them from haughtiness or any evil motive. Moreover, Kausalya who has made grants of number of villages to her servants she can maintain thousands like us and will have enough to maintain herself and my mother. Now, you please give me leave to follow you. It does not mean any violation of duty ; besides, my desires shall be fulfilled. I shall go before you as your guide with stringed, bow, a hoe and a basket in my hands. Every day I shall procure for you wild roots and fruits on which the ascetics live. You will enjoy yourself with Vaidehi in the hills and I shall do everything else whether you be awake or asleep."

Ram was greatly pleased with Lakshman's words

* The words are intended to dissuade Lakshman and do not represent Ram's real opinion.

and said, "You then take permission of your near and dear ones. At the sacrifice of Janaka, high-souled Varuna presented me two sets of formidable bows and weapons ; namely, impenetrable mails, inexhaustible quivers and arrows and two swords glittering as the sun. I have kept these in the house of my preceptor. Please go and fetch them quickly."

Then heroic Lakshaman took leave of his relations and speedily brought forth the arms from the preceptor's house. Ram was glad at this and he asked Lakshman to distribute his riches to the Brahmans and other dependants, and asked him to fetch swiftly worshipful Sujajna, the son of Vasistha, as he wanted soon to repair to the forest after greeting him duly.

Lakshman then went to Sujajna's house and asked him to come to Ram.

Sujajna then appeared, and Ram stood up with Sita and greeted the Brahman versed in the Veda, and effulgent like a flame of fire. After offering him excellent ornaments, bracelets, earrings, pearl-necklace strung with golden threads, and other jewels Ram conveying Vaidehi's wish to Sujajna said, "My friend! Go and give this necklace and collar to your wife. Janaki, my companion in forest life, also presents to your wife a girdle, bracelets, armlets and a bed-stead inlaid with various gems.

"Please accept them. And I offer to you the great elephant called Satrunjaya which I got from my maternal uncle. Please take it."

Sujajna accepted the presents and blessed them whole-heartedly. Ram then asked Lakshman to offer to sages Agasthya and Visvamitra gold, silver and thousands of kine with meet adoration, and to give silken clothe, maidservants, conveyances to the preceptor Taitiriya portion of the Veda who came every day to bless Kausalya.

"Worshipful Chitraratha," said Ram "is our charioteer and counsellor. He has grown very old, give him sufficient jewels, precious cloths and a sufficient number of cattles. There are number of Brahmacharis under my protection studying Katha portion of the Veda. They are always engaged in their studies, therefore they can not attend to any other work. They have great desire for good food but they are indolent, give them eighty camels-load of jewels, thousand bulls, and a large number of cows for milk, and clarified butter. Many such Brahmanas come to my mother, give thousand gold coins to every one of them to the satisfaction of the mother."

Lakshman then like Kuvera, the god of wealth, distributed riches to the Brahmanas. But the servants began to weep seeing them thus getting ready for the forest. Ram along with Lakshman gave liberally to the poor and the needy.

At that time, in that part of the country there lived a tawny coloured old Brahman named Trijata

born of Garga's line.* He had to earn his bread by digging the earth with spades and ploughs. His young wife suffered immensely on account of her husband's poverty. Hearing that Ram was distributing riches to the poor, she went to the Brahman with her young children and said, "Now lay aside your spade and plough and listen to what I say.

"Prince will repair to the forest to-day, and for that he is distributing riches to the poor. Go and see Ram and you will surely get something."

Then Trijata, effulgent as Bhrigu and Angira, covering his body with a piece of torn cloth swiftly proceeded to Ram's palace and appearing before Ram he said,

"Prince! I am a poor man and I have got a number of children. I have to earn my living by digging the earth. So please cast a look of mercy on me."

Ram then sportively said, "I have quite a number of cows and I have not as yet distributed

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* Here, it seems to be an interpolation a countryside tale introduced in the epic. But the story is significant in as much as it shows that digging, cultivation and other manual occupations were not consigned to the Sudras only but even a high caste Brahman would occasionally take to it; necessity has no law. A Brahmin carter is not a rare thing now. Yet caste and occupation are contended to be hereditary!

even one thousand of them, just throw your rod as far as you can, and you shall get as many cows that can occupy the space covered by your rod."

At this, Trijata quickly tightened the cloth round his waist and firmly grasping the stick in his hand hurled it with as much force as he could. The hurled rod fell on a herd of cattle on the other bank of the Saraju.

Then virtuous Ram sent all the cattle extending up to the other side of the Saraju to Trijata's hermitage, and after embracing Trijata said,

"Don't take any offence. I only said this in joke to see to what distance you could throw your rod. Now please tell me if you have anything to ask. Don't feel diffident, I am always willing to serve the Brahmans with my riches."

Then Trijata being exceedingly delighted by getting a number of cows went away to his place by blessing him profusely.

Heroic Ram then distributed his wealth amongst the Brahmans, servants, beggars and his friends.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE GRIEF.

Thus after distributing their wealth, Ram and Lakshman, in order to see their father, left the place with Sita. Two maid-servants carried before them the arms that were decorated with flowers and sandal paste by Sita herself.

The streets were overflowing with crowds. It was difficult to pass through them; therefore, many getting upon the terraces of their houses, and of seven-storied mansions cast painful looks on Ram. And seeing Ram, Lakshman and Sita walking on foot they burst forth in sorrow, "Alas! He who was followed by fourfold forces now walks accompanied by Sita and Lakshman alone. Ram has tasted the amenities of life, but for his righteousness he could not go against the wishes of his father. And every passer-by to-day beholds Sita who could not so long be seen even by the birds of the sky. Summer's heat, winter's chill and rains will soon mar the beauty of her body now adorned with red sandal paste. King Dasarath seems to have been possessed by an evil spirit or he would not have sent Ram to the forest. Not to speak of a son that has won over the love of all people, who forsakes even a worthless son?

"Absence of malice, generosity, learning, goodness, self-restraint, and the control of the senses are the six virtues that adorn Ram.

"The people will surely be greatly afflicted in his absence, as fishes and other aquatic animals become distressed when the waters of a tank are dried up by the burning rays of the sun. On account of his sufferings all will suffer, as the fruits, flowers and leaves of a tree become withered when its roots are severed. Let us therefore leave our houses, fields and gardens and follow Ram and like Lakshman let us with our wives and friends take the same path treaded by Ram. After this, the household deities will no more reside in the land, all religious institutions will be destroyed. Cattle, paddy, and treasures concealed under earth will be dug out and stolen. Dirt and filth will cover the courtyards, and rats will roam about freely ; no more smoke will rise from the blazing hearth, and all earthen wares will be broken. We shall leave our country and let Kaikeyi possess it. Then, the forest where Ram will repair will turn into a city and the deserted city into a forest. We shall live in happiness with Ram in the forest. Let now Kaikeyi with her son and friends uninterruptedly rule over the land."

Ram heard the people lamenting thus, but he was not least moved by that, but in cheerful countenance he proceeded onward to meet his father.

Ram then arriving at his father's palace sent

information through Sumantra, who found the King dark and overwhelmed with grief, as the sun under the eclipse, or fire covered with ashes, and intimated him about Ram's arrival. The King then asked Sumantra to bring there all his wives living in that part of the palace as he wanted to meet Ram with all his wives. Thereupon, Sumantra summoned all the wives of the King. Then three hundred and fifty wives surrounding Ram's mother Kausalya appeared before the King.

Ram, Lakshman and Sita were then ushered in before the King.

Then the King, as he saw Ram from distance coming towards him with raised palms, instantly rose from his seat and tried to embrace him, but he fainted on the ground, Ram, Lakshman and others then ran to his help. At this there rose a cry from the women and they began to strike their foreheads and breasts with their palms in sorrow, and thereby a jingling sound of the ornaments was produced.

Ram, Lakshman and Sita in tearful eyes placed the King on the sofa. When the King regained his consciousness, Ram said with clasped palms,

"I now intend to proceed to the Dandaka forest. You are lord of us all, please cast a merciful look on me.

"I have tried again and again to dissuade Lakshman and Sita by cogent reasons but they are

determined to accompany me, so please permit us to repair to the forest."

At this King Dasarath replied,

"My boy, I have lost my senses by conferring boons on Kaikeyi. You, therefore, occupy the throne by putting me into chains."*

Hearing this Ram hastened to reply in joined hands, "May you live for thousand years more and rule the earth. I have no hankering for the throne. I shall come back after fourteen years, by fulfilling your pledge."

At that time Kaikeyi to induce the King to agree to Ram's words secretly beckoned to Dasarath. At that signal Dasarath broke forth in tearful eyes,

"Go forth, my boy, fearlessly for the good in this world as well as in the next. May you have peace and happiness. Come back after the expiry of fourteen years.

"You are truthful and righteous. It is not possible to change your mind. But I request you that for the sake of your mother, you please stop this night here. I shall keep you all the time before my eyes and shall dine with you. Then after the night is over repair to the forest in the morning. You have undertaken to embrace arduous forest-life for my welfare in the next world. But I swear to you that I have

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* In the original it is by tying me down which in fact means imprisonment.

not the slightest desire to send you to the forest. But that wily and cruel Kaikeyi who is like smouldering fire hidden in ahes has prevented your installation.

"You are suffering on account of her. My boy! You are the best of my sons and there is no wonder that you will endeavour to carry out my words."

Then Ram said, "Father, I shall reap greater blessings to-day than kingdom. Please confer it on Bharat and prove yourself truthful. Please do not doubt me. I do not hanker for the throne either for my own happiness or for that of any dear ones of mine. Do not shed any more tears, nor be much anxious for me. I shall live happily in the forest where deer roam in herds and sweet birds sing. I shall come back again after fourteen years. All are crying for me, it is your duty to console them but if you yourself be overwhelmed with grief who will pacify them? Do not be sorry for me. I do not wish to possess kingdom or even dear Janaki by proving you untruthful to the world. May you live in peace, now permit to repair to the forest."

Dasarath deeply embraced Ram and again fainted from extreme sorrow. Thereupon all the queens excepting Kaikeyi began to weep. Sumantra too fainted in grief but he regained his consciousness soon, and being beside himself in towering rage he grinded his teeth. His face grew dark and with

red hot eyes and shaking his head addressing Kaikeyi said, "The ruler of the earth, King Dasarath, is your husband. When you could forsake such a husband, you are up to anything. You shouldn't have insulted your husband. It is the duty of the woman to act according to the wishes of her husband. You are bent upon to alter the time-honoured law of succession to the throne. How pious men will live in this kingdom? Strange! That the earth was not rent asunder at your conduct. Who can foretell the consequences of your act? Who clings to a bitter Nimba tree by cutting down a mango tree? Nimba never grows sweet however much you may pour water at the root of the tree. And it is not untrue that sweet juice is not extracted from the Nimba however much one may try. You are like your mother and I have heard that your mother was addicted to vice. Hear me why I say so.

"Formerly, a sage conferred on your father, King Kaikeya, a boon by which he was able to understand the language of beasts and birds. One day, Kaikeya was lying on his bed when a gold coloured Jrimbha bird made certain sounds, at which your father laughed heartily, knowing the intention of the bird. Seeing your father thus laughing without any cause your mother grew angry and said, "Tell me why are you laughing? If you do not disclose the cause of your laughter, I shall commit suicide.'

King Kaikeya replied, 'If I disclose to you the cause of my laughter I shall instantly meet with death.' Then your mother said, 'I don't care whether you live or die ; you must tell me the reason of your laughter, and henceforth you must not laugh at me.'

"Then the King went again to the saint who had conferred on him the boon and told him everything. The saint said, 'You must not disclose the secret to your wife even if she dies.' At this your father abandoned her instantly. It is said that a boy inherits the qualities of the father and a girl, that of the mother. I entreat you not to behave like your mother. I entreat you to act according to the wishes of the King and save us all. If Ram goes to the forest you will incur great public odium."

But Kaikeyi remained quite unmoved.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE PARTING SCENE.

King Dasarath greatly repented for his promise and he said in tears heaving a deep sigh, "O Sumantra ! Please despatch fourfold forces to the forest for serving Ram, and with them send damsels of clever speech, and rich merchants with their merchandise, and also those wrestlers who live under Ram and wrestle with him. Give them best arms, cars and fowlers well acquainted with everything of the forest. Let all the citizens go to the forest. They will forget the city by hunting, drinking wild honey, and by seeing rivers and streams. Let the servants carry into the forest all that is contained in the treasury and in the granaries. The prince will live happily by performing sacrifices and paying the Brahmans sufficiently. So send all articles of enjoyment with Ram. After this Bharat will reign in Ayodhya."

At this Kaikeyi's face grew dark and she said, "If all things of enjoyment be despatched to the forest then what Bharat will gain by receiving an empty kingdom—like a cup of liquor drunk to the lees ?"

Thereupon Dasarath angrily replied, "Why did you not mention these things at the time of asking for Ram's exile to the forest ?"

Kaikeyi then flaming in wrath asked the King to send Ram to the forest as the King Sagar turned out Asamanja from the city.

At this, an old friend of the King named Sidhyartha said, that Asamanja was a cruel tyrant, he used to amuse himself by throwing children into the waters of the Saraju. The people grew angry at this and they saw the King and asked in a body whether the King wanted them or Asamanja ? Thereupon the King sent Asamanja with his wife into exile to the forest. Virtuous Sagar deserted Asamanja because he was unruly whereas Ram is absolutely guiltless like the moon.

Hearing this Dasarath said, "You see, O Vicious woman ! The words of Sidhyaratha do not appear very pleasant to you. I shall, however, go with Ram, you remain here and rule with Bharat."

Then Ram entreatingly said, "Father ! What shall I do with troops since I am going to the forest by renouncing all luxury. After giving away the elephant in charity it is useless to grieve for its tether. I shall give every thing to Bharat. Somebody fetch me bark, hoe and a basket for going to the forest."

At this Kaikeyi herself brought a barkgarment, and she shamelessly said,

"Ram, I have brought you the bark, now put it on."

Then Ram put off his fine clothes and put on bark, the ascetic's garb. Lakshman too in presence of the father put on the ascetic's dress. Then Sita clad in silk became much alarmed at the sight of the bark-garment meant for her, as a doe gets frightened at the sight of a noose, and in tears she sorrowfully asked her husband, "O Lord! How the ascetics living in the forest put on their dress?" Thus being embarassed, Sita stood in shame by throwing one end of the bark on her neck and holding the other end in her hand. Seeing this Ram hied to her and tied the ascetic garb round her. Finding Ram thus fastening on Sita the ascetic's dress all the women burst into tears and they said, "Janaki has not been ordered into exile as you have been by the King. So long you do not come back we shall soothe ourselves by seeing Sita. So you go with Lakshman. Sita can't go with you like a nun. We know you are virtuous and you won't agree to stop. here, but we request you to leave Janaki here."

But Ram did not desist. At this., Vasistha, the priest of the clan, addressing Kaikeyi broke forth in tears, "Ah, you vile woman, your desires overstep your sense of honour. You have duped the King but you are now going to the extreme. Sita, however, can not go to the forest. She will occupy the throne in Ram's place, for wife is the better half of

a man. So Sita will rule over the earth being the half of Ram's self. If she accompanies Ram to the forest then we shall all repair to the forest—even the warders of the palace will leave for the forest. Bharat and Satrughna will follow Ram putting on bark-garments. Then this deserted city will turn into dreary forest where even the necessities of life will not be available. That will not be reckoned as a kingdom when Ram is not the King, and the forest where he will live will turn into a prosperous kingdom. Bharat will not accept the kingdom since the King confers it under compulsion, and if he is begotten of Dasarath he will not fail to act as a son towards you. He will not swerve an inch even if you are flitted into air or whatever might be your fate. So you have really injured your son by praying for his throne. There is none in this world who is not partial to Ram. You will witness it today. Beasts and birds will follow Ram, even the trees that are rooted to the ground have turned towards the direction of Ram. So take off that bark from Sita and put on excellent ornaments on her. The garb of an ascetic is not her proper dress. You have asked only for Ram's exile, what harm is there if she lives with him in good apparels. Let her take with her good clothes, cars and servants."

But Janaki did not desist at these words. She was bent upon to put on the ascetic's dress. When the daughter of Janaka having her husband living,

put on the ascetic's weeds, like a destitute one, all cried shame on Dasarath. Dasarath was greatly mortified at this and heaved a deep sigh of sorrow, then addressing Kaikeyi said, "Kaikeyi! Janaki is a tender girl brought up in the lap of happiness, let her not put on the bark garment. This exile of Janaki has been brought by you through your ignorance. But your desires will ruin you as the flowers of a bamboo destroys the bamboo itself. Are you not satisfied by sending Ram to the forest? You will be doomed to hell for your conduct."

Ram then with a bent look addressing Dasarath said,

"Father, my magnanimous mother Kausalya has not spoken anything ill about you after hearing the news of my exile. She has not as yet suffered any sorrow. She will be greatly pained at my separation. I commend her to your charge. She does not like my absence even for a moment, please see that she may not die for me."

Dasarath and his queens seeing Ram dressed like a hermit lost their senses in sorrow. Dasarath could not even look at Ram and became dumb with sorrow; and after some time when he regained his power of speech he began to lament bitterly.*

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* We again respectfully draw the attention of our readers to pages XII and 183 on interpolations and tell them once for all that we have avoided repetitions and have

Dasarath then asked Sumantra to escort Ram in chariot to the outskirts of the city, and asked the treasurer to fetch excellent clothes and ornaments for Janaki sufficient for the period of her exile. The treasurer shortly returned with ornaments and dress. Then high born Sita put on those oraments, and thus being adorned the whole room became radiant with her beauty as the sky is crimsoned by the glittering morning sun. Kausalya then after embracing her and kissing her head said,

"My daughter! The woman (though she may be the object of everyone's affection) who fails to serve her husband in adversity is reckoned as unchaste. The nature of such a false woman is that she enjoys happiness at time of her husband's prosperity, but in adversity accuses the husband of many things, nay more, even deserts him. She is untruthful, and gets irritated even at trivial things, because her mind is not attached to her husband. Fickel-minded women donot care for rank or lineage; they are not won over by ornaments or dress; they are ungrateful, and have little regard for righteousness

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attempted to bring the whole thing within a resonable compass by condensing all redundant and trivial things into a dense compact, as well as by our literary forms of expressions (trying to be more direct and terse than circuitous and figurative) but we had omitted nothing that may be missed.

and they never acknowledge their faults even when pointed out. But those who are obedient to their superiors, truthful and pure, regard their husbands as the supreme agents for moral and spiritual well-being. Now, though Ram has been sent into exile donot neglect him. Whether he be rich or poor you must always revere him as a God."

Janaki then replied in clasped palms, "I shall surely obey your words. I know how one ought to behave with her husband. I am inseparable from righteousness as the brightness from the moon, A woman can never be happy even with hundred sons without the husband her life is then like a lyre without the strings, or a chariot without its wheels. The gifts of the father, mother and the son are limited, it is only the husband's gifts that are unlimited, nobody can give so much. Who will not serve her husband ? Why should I slight my husband ? Husband is the highest God to a woman ?"

Kausalya was mightily pleased at Janaki's words.

Then Ram assured his mother saying that he would come back with Lakshman and Sita after fourteen years. There addressing the women there Ram said in clasped hands, "Mothers ! If on account of living together I have ever even unwittingly illtreated any one of you please forgive me today."

At this all the women burst into bitter cries, and

the palace which was once resounded with musical notes became reverberent with their lamentations.

Then Ram with Lakshman and Sita in clasped palms bowed at Dasarath's feet and after going round him, he bowed to his mother.

Lakshman first bowed to Kausalya and then to his mother Sumitra. Sumitra after kissing his head said,

My boy ! Though you are attached to all yet I ask you to repair to the forest. Your brother is going to the forest you must, therefore be vigilant in all things, you must regard Ram whether in prosperity or in adversity as your true lord. It is just that the younger should obey the elder. Now go to the forest, look upon Ram as you should look upon your father, on Janaki as your mother, and on deep forest as Ayodhya,"

Then Sumantra humbly asked Ram to get upon the car.

Then, first ot all, Sita cheerfully ascended the golden car glittering as the sun.

Then Ram aud Lakshman got upon the chariot after placing upon the car various arms, coats of mail, baskets and ornaments and cloths given to Sita by their father.

And the car began to move swiftly with a deep rumbling noise as soon as Sumantra whipped the horses swift as the wind.

Loud cries rose from every quarter and extreme

tumult seized the city. Men and women, the young and the old, all began to run after Ram, as thirsty travellers oppressed by the sun run after water.

They entreated Sumantra in tearful eyes to drive slowly, saying, "Let us once more see the lotus-face of the prince as we shall soon be deprived of it for a long time. Perhaps, his mother Kausalya's heart is made of iron or it would have rent to pieces by sending such a son to the forest. Blessed is virtuous Janaki for following him like a shadow. As the sun's rays never leave the peak of Sumeru, so she is never separated from Ram."

In the meantime Dasarath with his wives came out of the room to have a last look of Ram. At that time being cast down with sorrow Dasarath looked like the moon under the eclipse.

All the time Ram urged Sumantra to drive quickly, whereas the citizens clamoured to stop the car. Their tears drenched the street! They were almost senseless with grief; and tears fell from the eyes of the women, as collected rain-drops fall from the agitated lotuses being shaken by the movement of fishes. King Dasarath fainted at the sight, and a great tumult rose from the people.

When Ram cast his eyes behind, he found his father and mother following the car on foot being stricken with grief. As a tied up colt can not see its mother, so Ram bound by truth could not look to his mother. But the sight of their sufferings became

unbearable to him. He urged again and again Sumantra to drive more swiftly. But Kausalya ran after the car, as the cow after its calf and she began to cry aloud taking the names of Ram, Lakshman and Sita in turn. Dasarth asked to stop the car, whereas Ram urged to move on, and Sumantra sat confused. At this Ram said,

"Sumantra, if the King takes you to task after your return, tell him that you could not hear him on account of the tumult. But delay will cause me greater pain."

Then Sumantra drove the car at greater speed. Then the citizens and members of the royal family stopped by respectfully going round Ram in their thoughts, but their minds ran in the direction towards which Ram went.

Then the counsellors pursuaded Dasarath to desist. Dasarath with a sorrowful mien and perspiring body stood eagerly looking at Ram.

When Ram was gone woeful cries rose from the palace. Dasarath was greatly distressed by hearing these cries. Darkness and despair seemed to seize the land. Everybody was smitten with sorrow and began to think of Ram.

So long the dust raised by the chariot could be seen Dasarth stood motionless gazing at the same. But as soon as it was out of sight he fainted on the ground.

Then Kausalya raised him from the ground and

walked along with him by holding up his right hand, while Kaikeyi walked on his left.

Seeing Kaikeyi, Dasarath burst forth, "Ah, vile woman! Don't touch my body, I dont like to see your face. You are no wife to me. If Bharat be delighted by getting the kingdom, then his gifts on my funeral obsequies will not reach me in the next world."

Thoughts of Ram began to consume the King and he again and again turned back to behold the track of the car. Thinking that perhaps by that time Ram had reached the outskirts of the city, in tearful eyes he marked the hoof-prints of the horses hurrying Ram away to the forest. And at last, with a broken heart he entered the palace as the sun enters a bank of clouds, and in absence of Ram, Sita and Lakshman, the whole palace looked empty like a hollow deep.

CHAPTER XIX.

PEOPLE'S REGRET.

The citizens of Ayodhya all loved Ram dearly and they did not cease to follow Ram even when Dasarath desisted. They ran after his car.

Ram then eying them with affection, said, "Show the love and regard you have for me, in greater measure, at my request, to Bharat. That son of Kaikeyi is good-natured and he will surely contribute to your good and happiness. Though young in years he is old in wisdom, he has great might yet he is tender-hearted, he will be able to remove all your fears. The qualities that should adorn a king are possessed in a greater degree by Bharat than by myself. He will be a worthy ruler of you. It is your duty now to obey him in every respect."

But the people in tearful eyes entreated for Ram to be the King. Meanwhile old Brahmins shaken with age, pursued his car and asked Ram to desist. Ram then with Lakshman and Sita got down from the car and respectfully persuaded them to stop. The Brahmins said, "We shall follow you in a body, since you honour us most. We shall protect your head in the Sun with our umbrellas white as autumnal clouds, obtained from the sacrifice of Vajapeya. We shall carry our learning and Vedic lore to the forest and our wives

will attend to your domestic duties. We entreat you by knocking our grey heads on dust not to repair to the forest. All creatures love you and are dissuading you from proceeding to the forest. Look, the tall trees rooted to the earth, thus being unable to follow you, are dissuading you by deep murmuring sound produced by the wind. Look, even the birds have ceased from their quest of food."

When the Brahmins were thus speaking, Ram saw the banks of the Tamasa from distance.

On reaching the banks of the Tamasa, Sumantra unyoked the horses; and as soon as the horses were unharnessed they began to roll in the dust·

Ram then sat on the beautiful bank of the Tamasa, and looking at Janaki he said to Lakshman, "My boy, this is first night of our exile in the forest. But don't feel aggrieved. The people of Ayodhya are sorry for us for they love us deeply. I am extremely sorry for my father and mother. Surely they have become blind with tears. Virtuous Bharat will no doubt console them and I feel greatly relieved by thinking of the amiable qualities of Bharat. Lakshman, you have done good by accompanying me, or for the protection of Janaki I would have to take another's help. Let us pass the night on this bank. There is plenty of wild fruits here but I have resolved to take nothing else but water this night."

Ram then asked Sumantra to look after the

horses, and Sumantra gave them sufficient quantity of grass.

Seeing the night about to set in, Ram with the help of Lakshman prepared a bed, and lay on it with Sita. Then finding Ram asleep, Lakshman repaired to Sumantra and talked about Ram.

CHAPTER XX.*

NIGHT IN THE PALACE.

King Dasarath came back to his palace stricken with grief and remorse. "How Ram, accustomed to rest his head pleasantly on a pillow, and fanned by beautiful women, will sleep under a tree and lay his head on a piece of wood or stone? How will he bear the hardships of a forest-life? Such thoughts pained the King greatly and he asked the sentries in a faltering voice to take him to Kausalya's quarters. When the warders did so, Dasarath entered the room hanging down his head in sad dejection. He was oppressed by the gloomy look of the room, as the sky appears cheerless without the moon, and he cried, "Ah, Ram! How could you leave your parents? Ah, they are happy who will survive to witness your return."

At midnight Dasarath said to Kausalya, "I do not see you, please touch my body with your palm. My power of vision has gone with Ram."

Then Kausalya aggrieved for her son, said, "My Lord! Crooked Kaikeyi having vented her venom will now freely roam about like a snake that has

* This chapter occurs before the preceeding one but in sequence of time it should be inserted after.

cast off her slough. If Ram had stopped at home and lived on alms or if I had made him Kaikeyi's slave, even that would have been better. But sent by you to the forest at Kaikeyi's words what privations he will be subject to. Will such a time ever come when my sorrow will be over by seeing Ram returning with Lakshman and Sita ? Certainly, I had formerly committed great sin by cutting off the udders of cows thus preventing the calves from drinking their mother's milk, and it is for this that I have been deprived of my son. I can not live without my son."

Then virtuous Sumitra consoled her, saying, "O worshipful lady, your son is a prince among men, why do you weep so bitterly ? Your son has gone to the forest to fulfil the pledge of his father, and he will reap immense benefit in the next world. Lakshman will minister unto Ram and I tell you that considering Ram's heroism and good qualities there is no doubt that he will return from the forest and regain his Kingdom. And Ram will be installed on the throne with the Earth, Vaidehi and the Goddess of victory. Banish your sorrows, evil cannot touch Ram. You will again see your son, like the new-risen moon bowing at your feet, and and you will shed tears of joy like drops of rain from the clouds."

At this Kausalya's grief was somewhat assuaged.

CHAPTER XXI.

FRIENDSHIP WITH GUHAK.

Ram passed the night on the bank of the Tamasa and he rose from sleep with the rise of the dawn. He then addressing Lakshman, said, "My boy! The people have left their homes for our sake. They are resolved to take me back. Let us, while they are asleep, get into our car and quickly leave this place."

Lakshman agreed and Ram then asked the charioteer to yoke the horses. Sumantra soon got the chariot ready. Ram got upon it with Sita and Lakshman and in a short time left behind the Tamasa full of eddies and set out towards the North.

When the day dawned the citizens began to cast tearful glances all round, but even the dust raised by the wheels of the chariot could not be seen.

"Ah, cursed is sleep!" They broke forth in one voice. "It is for sleep that we have missed that broad-chested and mighty-armed hero. How could he leave us since he looked after us as an affectionate father looks after his sons? Here we shall die or proceed towards the north to meet death. Sufficient dry woods are available on the banks of the Tamasa, we shall prepare a funeral pyre and then cast

ourselves into it. What is the good of living without Ram ?*"

Then the citizens for some distance followed the track of the car but as it could no more be traced they returned to the city with tearful eyes. When they came back all were overwhelmed with grief. People gave up rejoicing. Merchants did not open their stalls or spread their stores. In every family all the members were smtiten with sorrow and householders even neglected their everyday duties.

All the women cursed Kaikeyi and said, "Blessed are Sita and Lakshman for they have followed Ram. Blessed are the rivers and ponds in which Ram will bathe. The mountains will greet him as a welcome guest. Trees will contribute to his comfort by providing him with beds of leaves. The mountains will

* Such deep love for the king seems to be somewhat extravagant. But in the Twentieth century the victorious Japanese General Count Nogi committed suicide at the death of national life of the Emperor of Japan. Eastern people are moie emotional. And the Ramayan represents a particular phase, "The life a nation" says Ruskin, "is usually, like the flow of a lava stream, first bright and fierce, then languid and covered, at last advancing only by the tumbling over and over of its frozen blocks. And that last condition is sad one to look upon. All the steps are marked most clearly in the arts."

present him with choicest fruits and flowers and crystal water for drink. Ram will witness trees with wonderful blossoms and buds with swarms of bees hovering on them. Where is Ram there is no defeat or fear."

The day then declined in sorrow, the sun set, as if being unable to see the sorrows of the people. And the whole of Ayodhya looked like a starless night.

Meanwhile Ram in order to fulfil his father's promise cleared a long distance and the day dawned on his way. After saying his morning prayers Ram entered into a different province and proceeded along witnessing ploughed fields, flower-gardens and villages on both sides of the road. The car was moving very fast, but Ram was insensible to its motion being absorbed in delight at the sight of natural beauties, When the villagers saw Ram they cursed both Dasarath and Kaikeyi. Thus Ram reached the last limits of Koshala. Then after crossing the sacred stream Vedasruti Ram proceeded towards the south. After some distance he crossed the Gomati flowing into the ocean. He then crossed over the Syandika resounding with the cackling notes of the swans and ducks. Here Ram pointed out to Sita the regions which Manu made over to king Ikshwaku.

Then addressing Sumantra, Ram said, "When shall I again be back and hunt among the flowery woods on the banks of Saraju with my parents? Of course, I have no great love for hunting but since it has been

sanctioned by host of saintly kings I can not condemn it as something forbidden."

Ram then turned towards Ayodhya and said with clasped palms, "Ah, my beloved city governed by the Raghus, I bow to thee and to all the deities that protect you and live in you. I shall greet you again with my parents, returning from forest after being absolved from the debt of vow."

Ram then raising his hands, addressiug the people said, "You have shown sufficient regard and love for me. You must not suffer any more. Now go back and allow me to proceed to my destination."

Thereupon the people returned after saluting Ram. They again and again stopped on their way to have a look of Ram. But their eyes were not gratified by seeing Ram again and again.

At last Ram vanished out of their sight like the evening sun, and left behind the kingdom of Koshla inhabited by generous people, where the Vedas are continually chanted, which abounds in tanks and mango-groves and is rich in wealth, cattle and grains, crowded with hamlets, 'each worthy of a monarch's care.

Ram then reached prosperous Sringaverapura beautified with gardens. There he found the sacred Ganges flowing with a deep murmuring sound. There the crystal water of the Ganges were cool and transparent like gems and beautiful hermitages stood on its banks. At some places the river was dashing

furiously against rocks and stones. Somewhere it was laughing in foams, at some places it was flowing like a braid of hair, and somewhere it was full of eddies. At some places, ducks and cranes were making noise on sandy tracts, somewhere the trees stood in a row like a garland and somewhere lilies and lotus were floating on the stream. Ram at the sight of Bhagirathi said, "Look, Sumantra, at a short distance from the river there stands an Ingudi tree adorned with blossoms and leaves. We shall put up there."

Lakshman and Sumantra agreed and the car quickly drove near the tree. Ram, Janaki and Lakshman got down from the car, Sumantra then unyoked the horses and came near Ram for serving him.

There lived at that place a powerful king of the Nishadas called Guhak. Hearing that Ram had arrived in the Nishada* Kingdom, Guhak with his aged ministers and friends came to Ram and after expressing his deep sorrow and embracing him said, "Friend, you should consider my kingdom as yours like Ayodhya. Now tell me what shall I do for you. It is only through good fortune that one gets such a welcome guest.

* Most probably a non-Aryan people whose chief occupation was hunting, and untouchable to the high-caste Hindus.

Saying this, the Nishad King brought Arghya and delicious fruits and asked, "Friend, had you a pleasant journey? This Nishada Kingdom is yours and we are your servants. Now please accept this food and drink, beds and also fodder for your horses."

Ram hearing these words said, "Oh! Nishada King, I have been well received and extremely glad that you have come from a distance to show your affection for me."

Saying this, Ram deeply embraced Guhak and said, "It is due to my good luck that I find you hale and hearty with your friends and relations. Is everything safe with your kingdom and forest? The things you have presented me out of love I can not accept. For I shall have to live like an ascetic by wearing bark and living on roots and fruits. So I can not accept anything but fodder from you for the horses. These horses are dear to king Dasarath and I shall think myself entertained if they are cared for and fed."

Ram then said his evening prayers and after it was over Lakshman brought drinking water for Ram. After drinking water Ram lay down with Janaki on ground. Lakshman then after washing their feet took shelter under a tree.

Finding Lakshman keeping up the night for protection of Ram Guhak sorrowfully said, "Prince, soft bed has been prepared for you; just take your rest, we can bear all hardships at ease. I will with how

in hand and with my men guard my friend reposing with Sita. I always roam in the forest and there is nothing unknown to me." At this Lakshman replied, "Oh Nishada king, I know you are virtuous and when you have taken the responsibility of protection there is nothing to fear from. But look the chief of the Raghu's line is lying on the ground with Janaki. Then what necessity is there for my sleep. He is our eldest and father got him after long prayers as a divine favour. Surely, the king wont survive long after sending Ram to the forest, and soon the earth will be widowed by his death. O, Nishad Chief! I don't think Kausalya, Sumitra and Dasarath are still alive. If it is so, they wont survive this night. My mother may live by looking up to Satrughna, But Kausalya will die for her son. I know not what will happen to father in absence of his eldest son. He will die, and Kausalya after her. They are fortunate who will be able to perform the funeral rites of my father, and live in Ayodhya—my father's capital beautified with fine terraces, gardens, wide roads, magnificent palaces, and inhabited by happy and healthy citizens and where there is plenty of horses, elephants, cars and courtezans. Alas! Heaven alone knows whether father is alive or not—"

At break of dawn Ram said, "Lakshman, the night is passed, the cuckoos are singing in the wood and the cries of peacocks are being heard. Let us

now cross the Ganges." Then addressing Sumantra Ram said, "Go back to the King soon, my journey by the car must now end.

"Henceforth I shall walk on foot and enter the deep forest, just see that father may not be too much distressed for me, and after conveying my deep respects please tell him on my behalf that I am not sorry for my exile from the city, or for habitation in the forest. After the expiry of fourteen years he will find us with Janaki again.

"After saying this to my father and mother convey the same to my other mothers and Kaikeyi. Give Kausalya our respect and tell her that everything is alright with us. Also tell the King to fetch Bharat soon and install him on the throne. Please also tell dear Bharat that he should behave with our mothers as he will behave towards the king and to look upon Sumitra and Kausalya as he will look upon Kaikeyi." Sumantra then said with tears, "I now find that virtue, gentleness, candour are not rewarded on this earth."

Ram then pursuaded Sumantra to leave him and go back to the city.

Sumantra then burst forth in tears, "How shall I go back with the empty car? Permit me to follow you. After the expiry of the period of exile I shall return with you to Ayodhya in this car. Living with you I shall not feel the length of time."

Ram then said, "I know you love me, but you

must go back. On your return mother Kaikayi will be confirmed about my banishment. But so long you do not go back she will doubt it and suspect the righteous King. My prime motive is that Kaikeyi may enjoy the kingdom of Bharat. You therefore go back for me and for my father."

Ram then asked Guha to fetch him a boat for crossing the Ganges. At this the king of the Nishada said to his men, "Bring without delay a good and a strong boat furnished with a rudder and steered by a helmsman."

When the boat was brought, Guha asked, "Get up on the boat and tell me what more I shall do for you ?"

Ram said, "Guha ! I have gained my object through your help. Now, put my things on the boat." Saying this Ram put on his coat of mail, took his bow and sword, began to descend the bank with Lakshman and Sita. At that time Sumantra approached Ram and said in joined hands, "Prince ! Tell me what am I to do now ?"

Ram then touching him by the right hand said, "You now speedily return to the King. You are a friend of the Ikshwaku line. Father has been greatly mortified by my absence. Just console him and tell him that he will find us again in the capital after fourteen years. Tell him that we are not least sorry for leaving the city for the forest. Please see that the King may not be unhappy in any way."

Sumantra then shed bitter tears and stood mute with a sorrowful heart.

Ramchandra then turning to Guha said, "Guha! It does not seem proper to me to live in a forest inhabited by men. I should now live in a hermitage and should be properly dressed for that. I shall repair to the forest like an ascetic with Sita and Lakshman; please bring me the gum of a Banian tree for producing the matted hair of an ascetic."

Then the Banian gum was brought. The two brothers then matted their locks and put on bark-garments whereupon they looked like two Rishis.

At the time of departure, Ram addressing Guha said, "My friend! There are good many difficulties in administering a kingdom, so you should always be vigilant about your army, exchequer, forts and provinces." Reaching the edge of the Ganges, Ram asked Lakshman first to help Janaki to get upon the boat and then get into it himself. This being done, Ram boarded the boat. Then the boat began to move swiftly being pulled by the oars.

Lakshman and Janaki bowed to the Ganges, and when the boat reached the midstream, Janaki with clasped palms said, "O Ganga! May the prince through your grace safely fulfil the vow. May he return with us after passing fourteen years in the forest. After returning safely I shall worship you to my heart's content. You are the consort of the Ocean, and you cover the regions of Brahma. O

Goddess! I bow to thee. If Ram returns safely and gets back his kingdom I shall distribute for you through Brahmanas thousands of kine, horses, jars of wine and pillao.* I shall worship the gods that dwell in your banks and the holy shrines and the sacred places of piligrimage that stand on your banks."

The boat soon reached the right bank of the Ganges. Then landing from the boat Ram said to Lakshman, "Be careful for the protection of Sita, be it in solitude or in society of men. You walk ahead and let Sita follow you. I shall go after you protecting you both. It is necessary to protect each other. To-day Janaki has entered that forest where there is no human habitation and where the ground is uneven and full of pits and holes. Janaki will experience the hardships of a forest-life even from this day."

Ram then reached the rich province of Batsa, rich in grains. Ram then killed boars and deer and taking their sacred meat entered the forest in the evening.

After saying his evening prayers, Ram spoke to Lakshman, "This is the first night that we are going to spend outside the city. You should not feel uneasy for that. Henceforth, we shall have to be

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* An Indian delicacy—rice cooked with clarified butter and various rich spices, along with meat or fish wrongly supposed to have been introduced in the Mahomedan rule.

vigilant at night. It rests with us to protect what Sita possesses and also to secure her what she dosen't possess. Come, let us ourselves collect grass and leaves and prepare a bed on the ground and somehow lie down on it."

Lying down on a bed of leaves under a Banian tree, Ram said, "Brother, surely the King is passing a miserable night. Kaikey's desire has been fulfilled, From this incident it seems to me that lust is the most powerful passion in man—even stronger than greed for gold. He that follows lust forgetting all other interests brings miseries on him like King Dasarath. Kaikeyi may now slight Kausalya and Sumitra. Your mother will be greatly afflicted for us. So go back to Ayodhya to-morrow morning. I shall alone go with Sita to the Dandaka forest. Mother Kausalya will suffer much on my account. Hence no woman bring forth an unworthy son like me. What service have I rendered to my mother?"

Then finding Ram to be silent Lakshman observed, "Arya, surely Ayodhya looks gloomy like a moonless night. I can not live without you. I donot care for my parents or heaven being separated from you." The forests were devoid of human beings and there was none with them but they lay down fearlessly as lions on lonely mountain peaks.

CHAPTER XXII.

HERMITAGE OF BHARADWAJ.

As the sun rose in the east they rose from sleep, and proceeded towards the confluence of the Ganges and the Jamuna, and in their way they beheld various landscapes and flowery trees.

When the day declined, Ram said to Lakshman, "Look, smoke rising from the direction of Prayag. Perhaps some ascetic lives near. We have certainly arrived near the confluence of the Ganges and the Jamuna. The deep rumbling noise is distinctly heard."

In the evening Ram reached the hermitage of saint Bharadwaj, by putting beasts and birds of the asylum into fright, and found the great anchorite seated with his disciples. Ram after saluting the sage with Lakshman and Sita, said, "Sir, we are the sons of King Dasarath. I am Ram and he is Lakshman. This auspicious daughter of Janaka—the saintly king—is my wife. In obedience to the mandate of our father we are now repairing to the forest." Hearing this the ascetic welcomed him with Arghya and offered him a bull* and various kinds of fruits

* It alludes to the custom when the Hindus were in the habit of taking beef. When a notable guest came, the host often offered him a calf or a bull for his entertainment.

and roots and drinking water, and assigned to him a place of rest.

Then Bharadwaj and other hermits sat round Ram and Bharadwaj said,

"Ram! We have heard that you have been banished for nothing. However live in this beautiful secluded place."

Ram replied, "There are cities and human habitations near about it, People will then easily see me and Janaki, and they will then often come to us. For this reason the place does not appear to be much commendable to me. Name me some lonely place where Janaki may live happily."

Bharadwaj said, 'There is a mountain called the Chitrakuta, twenty miles away from this place. Plenty of Golangulas, bears and monkeys live there. The hill is sacred. Many old saints from there have attained heaven by devoting themselves to meditations for hundreds of years. It seems to me the Chitrakuta will be pleasant to you, or if you like you may live with me in my hermitage."

Ram passed the night with Sita and Lakshman in the hermitage.

The sanskrit word Goghna means a traveller or a guest who was entertained by the slaughter of a cow or a bull. Allusion to it is to be found even in so late a production as Bhavabhuti's Uttarcharita.

In the morning, Ram asked Bharadwaj's permission to proceed to the Chitrakuta.

Bharadwaj said, "The Chitrakuta is the best place for you. You will get plenty of fruits, roots and honey there. It abounds in trees. There you will always hear the notes of cuckoos and the cries of peacocks. You will be delighted by seeing with Sita the mountain sceneries."

Then Ram made arrangements for going to the Chitrakuta and after performing auspicious rites for the welfare of Ram, Sage Bharadwaj said,

"After reaching the confluence of the Ganges and the Jamuna proceed along the Jamuna flowing to the west. After going some distance you will find a place of pilgrimage, from that place cross the river in a raft. There stands a very high Banian tree, called Shyam, with yellowish green leaves. It is surrounded by various trees and many hermits live under it. You bow down to that tree with clasped palms, and rest under its shade. You will then come across a blue forest on the banks of the Jamuna. I had been to the Chitrakuta many a time. This is the route to go there. It is a beautiful sandy place and there never occurs any forest-fire."

Ram then proceeded according to the directions of Bharadwaj. Ram crossed the swift stream of Jamuna by preparing a raft with dry woods covering with it with grass. Mighty Lakshman made a seat for Sita with cane and branches of the rose-apple. Then

Ram made his dear, bashful wife, glorious like the Goddess of fortune, to get upon the boat, and placed beside her, clothes, ornaments, hoe and the basket covered with a goat skin. Then Ram and Lakshman got upon the boat.

When the boat arrived at midstream, Sita prayed to the sacred stream. By that raft they crossed the rapid flowing daugther of the sun, heaving with waves. Then they entered a forest on the bank of the Jamuna.

Vaidehi bowed to the great Banian true known as Shyam. And as Sita saw various kinds of trees, shrubs and hitherto-unforeseen creepers with fruits and flowers she questioned Ram out of curiosity, at which Lakshman brought her promptly divers kinds of fruits and flowers. At that time Sita was mightily pleased at the sight of the crystal watered Jamuna resounding with the notes of cranes and ducks.

After walking about two miles Ram and Lakshman killed a number of deer, took thier meat and passed the night on the even bank of the river.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE CHITRAKUTA.

When the night was over Ram gently roused Lakshman from sleep.

"Lakshman ! Just hear how sweet the birds are chirping ; it is time for our departure."

After bathing in the Jamuna they waded their way to the Chitrakuta. On the way Ram, pointing the woods to Sita, said,

"Look Sita, how on account of flowers blossoming in the spring, the Kinsuka tree seems to be garlanded and appears to be encircled by a flame (for its red flowers). Behold the Bhallatak and the Bel are bent down with fruits and flowers and big honey-comb hangs almost on every tree. Datyaher and peacocks are crying in shrill notes and the ground is covered with flowers fallen from the trees. There is the Chitrakuta (at a little distance) loud with the notes of wild birds and where elephants roam about in herds. Lakshman ! we shall live happily in the valley of the Chitrakuta."

After walking a short distance they reached the Chitrakuta mountain,and Ram said, "Lakshman, here we shall get plenty of food, and its water is delightful to taste. Probably we won't have to toil here to

support ourselves. Good many hermits live here. It is a fit place for our abode. Let us then settle here."

Then they arrived at the hermitage of Valmiki and introduced themselves to the great saint. Valmiki* too welcomed them hospitably. Then Ram asked Lakshman to build a cottage with strong woods. Lakshman, thereupon, erected a beautiful hut with wooden wall on four sides and a thatched roof. Ram then said, "Let us now procure venison to perform a sacrifice for sanctifying the house. Those who want to live for a long time they ought to perform the rite. Therefore quickly kill some deer and bring their meat. It is proper to abide by the rules of the Shastras."

Lakshman brought the venison, and Ram said, "You go and cook the meat and I shall perform the ceremony."

Lakshman then threw the meat into fire, and when it was well roasted and free from blood, he then informed Ram that he had cooked a black deer. Ram then performed the ceremony and after worshipping the Gods he entered the cottage. And after that he offered sscrifices to Rudra, Vishnu and Viswadevas. After this Ram took

* These lines conclusively prove that the original poem of Valmiki has undergone great changes at different hands and in different ages, and the whole epic has been overrun with interpolations.

his bath in the stream and erected chaitya and sacred altar as suited the cottage. Ram then with Janaki and Lakshman entered the cottage. And Janaki lived happily there. She was immensely glad in seeing the Malyavati stream furnished with good bathing places and visited by wild fowls and deer, She forgot the sorrow of her exile from Ayodhya to the forest.

CHAPTER XXIV.

SUMANTRA'S RETURN.

When Ram crossed the Ganges, Guha sorrowfully returned to his place, and learnt from envoys Rama's visit to Bharadwaj at Prayag, and his journey to the Chitrakuta.

Sumantra, then at the words of Guha, yoked the horses to his chariot and proceeded towards Ayodhya with a broken heart.

On the third day, at dusk, Sumantra reached Ayodhya and found it sad and silent like a deserted city. Seeing Sumantra coming back the citizens ran after the car, crying "Where is Ram ?"

Sumantra then said, "I have come back at the command of Ram from the bank of the Ganges. I know nothing more about him."

Then the citizens burst into tears thinking that Ram had already crossed the Ganges. Sumantra heard the women bitterly lamenting for Ram standing by the side of the windows. Sumantra then enterd the palace covering his face with a piece of cloth. As he passed through seven apartments crowded with prominent people, women on the roof of the palace began to cry for Ram and they cast dim look from their large, glassy, tearful eyes. Royal dames descended

from the palace and broke forth with their voices softened in grief.

"Ah! Sumantra went forth with Ram but why has he come alone? We know not how he will console Kausalya. Seeing Kausalya still alive it seems life is full of sorrow, and death does not come when prayed for."

Sumantra on entering the eighth room found the King, pale and cast down with sorrow, seated in a yellow-coloured room. Then Sumantra, after making proper obesiance to the King, reported Ram's speech to the King and Dasarath fainted from grief.

Kausalya and Sumitra then raised the King and began to weep. Kausalya said to Dasarath, "Why do you not talk to him who has brought message from him? Do you now feel ashamed by sending Ram into forest? In whose fear you donot talk to Sumantra, that Kaikeyi is not here. So speak to him freely."

Kausalya then herself fainted on the ground and loud cries rose from the palace.

When after fanning, Dasarath regained his consciousness he asked Sumantra to come before him. Sumantra then covered with dust appeared before the King, and Dasarath questioned him with sigh.

"Tell me where is now my righteous Ram? What food he takes? Unaccustomed to privations how he is bearing all such hardships? How he sleeps on the ground? How he is passing his time in the

forest full of ferocious animals and poisonous snakes? How they walked on foot with delicate Janaki with them? You are happy as you have seen them last. What Ram has said? What Lakshman has said? And what Sita has said?

"Tell me everything about Ram I shall sustain my life with those tidings."

Then Sumantra in clasped palms said, "O, great King! Righteous Ram bowing down his head and with joined hands said, 'Sumantra! Convey my words at the feet my father, and my greetings and news of my welfare to all the royal ladies. Tell mother Kausalya that I shall stick to the path of virtue, and she shall properly worship the Fire in the fire-worshipping hall and minister unto the feet of my father, and also bear herself properly in her behaviour towards my other mothers. A King is adorable though junior in age, so she should honour Bharat as the rightful sovereign. Convey my good wishes to Bharat and tell him that it is not proper to depose old father so let him continue to be the King and let Bharat rule on his behalf.

"Ram paused and then with tearful eyes said to me, 'Sumantra, you should look upon my mother as your own mother.'

"Lakshman angrily wanted to know the cause why the King banished his son? And Sita hitherto unacquainted with sorrow began to shed silent tears. I then returned with the empty chariot.

At Sringverapura I stayed long with Guha in the expectation that Ram might again send for me. At the time of returning the horses began to shed hot tears and they could not carry the car as before. In thy kingdom, even trees full of blossoms and buds look sad for the calamity that has befallen Ram. The rivers and pools have become hot and their waters unclean; the lotuses have closed their petals, and the woods and grass have been withered. Fishes and aquatic birds lie submerged in water, all animals are listless, even the beasts of prey do not roam about, and the forest appears to be dumb and stupefied by grief on account of Ram. The flowers both on land and water do no longer possess their former fragrance and freshness, and fruits have become tasteless. The bowers are lonely and the birds are mute, and the gardens do not look at all charming. O, King! When I entered Ayodhya none greeted me, and the people sighed for Ram. They began to shed tears in grief, when they beheld the royal car returning without Ram. The people of Ayodhya have become dejected and are heaving windy sighs. Every one is cheerless, even the horses and elephants have become spiritless. Ayodhya appears to be as wretched as Kausalya deprived of her son,"

Hearing the words of Sumantra, the King Dasarath addressed him in a voice choked with grief, "I did not consult with aged people capable

of offering advice when I promised for Ram's banishment being exhorted by Kaikeyi ; without consulting my friends and courtiers I have at the request of a woman rashly done this thing. It seems to me that this calamity has befallen us surely through the influence of destiny for the purpose of destroying this line."

"Sumantra, if I have done you any good, please take me to Ram. I am dying for him, Ah ! Where is now that pearl-teethed hero ? My end is near and I am dying like a destitute."

Dasarath then spoke to Kausalya, "I have fallen into an ocean of grief for absence of Ram. The sighs are its waves and eddies, movements of arms are fishes in it, crying is its deep murmuring sound, Kaikeyi its submarine fire, and the words of Kuvja are crocodiles and sharks, the promised boons are its shores, and its width is the exile of Ram, tears like rivers are rushing to it ; ah, I pine for Lakshman and Ram."

Dasarath fainted again and Kausalya began to tremble in all her limbs like one possessed by an evil spirit and implored Sumantra again and again to take him to Ram, Lakshman and Sita. Sumantra then consoling her said, "Ram is living in the forest with an undisturbed mind and Sita is enjoying her forest-life with him, and self-possessed Lakshman is engaged in ministering to their good. The beauty of Sita, like the shine of the moon, has not lost its

lustre on account of inclement weather, sunshine or fatigue. Her feet though not now dyed with lac but they are naturally of purple hue, as if painted with lac dye, and looked like lotus buds. She still now wear ornaments and with her tinkling anklets imitates the swan in her gait. Don't be overwhelmed with sorrow for them."

Kausalya then with tearful eyes turned to Dasarath and accused him for banishing Ram without any just cause. She asked, "How the elder brother will enjoy the kingdom once ruled over by the younger? The tiger does not touch food gathered by another. And who is the best of all men cannot have an inclination for things already tasted by another. Clarified butter, Kusha, sacrificial cakes, stakes of wood once used in a sacrifice cannot be used in another. So how Rama will accept the kingdom once enjoyed by Bharat like Soma when the best body of the liquor has been drunk? As the fish destroys its own brood so you have ruined Rama. A woman has got three great stays in life, the first is husband, the second is son, and the third is her relatives and you are no more mine and have sent Ram into exile."

Dasaratha was overwhelmed with grief and thought about the cause of his miseries. After a deep and long thought he found out the cause, and he remembered how through ignorance he had committed a sinful act by killing a hermit boy, hitting

him with a shaft—aiming at him from the direction of the sound. Dasarath then addressing Kausalya said, "Oh, Lady, you are affectionate even towards your enemies, be pleased with me. Virtuous women regard their husbands as living gods, be they accomplished or not." Kausalya began to shed tears like a cloud in the rains and apologised for her harsh words and said,

"My Lord, I have regard for religion and I know you are truthful. I have used unpleasant words being beside myself with sorrow for the absence of my son."

"Wisdom and patience are destroyed by sorrow, so there is no enemy like sorrow. This is the fifth night that Ram has left for the forest, but it seems, as if, five years have elapsed. There is an ocean of sorrow in my heart."

CHAPTER XXV.

ANDHA MUNI'S TALE.

Night came, Dasarath fell asleep, but his sleep was soon broken by the thoughts of Ram, and the recollection of his sinful act—killing a hermit's son—rose in his mind. Dasarath then spoke to afflicted Kausalya,

"O Queen! A man reaps the consequences of his acts, good or bad, according to the nature of his deeds. He is a child who does not calculate about the probable consequences of his act before he actually does it. I was a fool in cutting down the mango tree and watering at the root of a useless Palas, so I have been rightly disappointed. Now hear me why such a calamity has fallen on my fate."

"When in my youthful days I learnt the art of archery, I could then hit a thing from the mere direction of its sound without seeing the thing itself. The people, therefore, called me "the piercer of the sound." During these days, I committed a great sin through ignorance, but poison never ceases to act because a child has drunk it through ignorance."

"When I was a prince, and before my marriage with you, once I set out for hunting in the lustful rainy season. When the sun retired to the south

by drying up the sap of the earth, intense heat declined and humid clouds were seen hanging on the horizon. Peacocks, Chatakas and frogs began to croak in joy. The branches of the trees were being shaken by force of the wind and rain, and the birds, with the surface of their wings wet with rain., with great difficulty took shelter in them. The mountains overflowed with rivulets and streams, and their waters being mixed up with mineral substances and ashes flowed in snake-like zigzag course. At that time, I felt a great desire for hunting, and thereupon, to kill buffaloes, elephants and other beasts that might come to water for their drink at night, I repaired to the bank of the Saraju in my car."

"At last, every thing was enveloped in darkness and I heard in the waters of the Saraju a gurgling sound like that of filling water into a pitcher, as is often produced by an elephant when it drinks. I then took up a deadly shaft from my quiver and sent it towards the direction from which the sound proceeded. As soon as the arrow went flying I heard the groans and cries of a man! He was, in truth, a hermit! He was struck in the heart and fell into water. Then the injured man said, 'I am a hermit, why have you struck me with an arrow? I came to the lonely river to fetch water at night. What have I done? I live on wild fruits and roots and do nothing that may pain anybody. This is a

highly reprehensible act. I am not, however, sorry for my own death, but I am sorry for the distress that will befall my old parents. I am their only support. Who will maintain them in my absence? Thus all of us have been struck down by one shaft. Who is that greedy boy that has killed us thus?"

"O Queen, as I heard these piteous words from the hermit-boy at night, my bow dropped down from my hand. I was overwhelmed with dark apprehension and sorrow, and slowly proceeded towards the spot. On coming there I found an ascetic struck by the arrow. His matted locks were dishevelled, he was besmeared with blood and dust, and the pitcher with water was lying on the ground."

"When the hermit saw me standing before him, he said, 'I am a denizen of the forest. I came to the Saraju to fetch water for my parents, why did you strike me? In one shaft you have killed me as well as my blind father and mother. They are weak and thirsty and surely they are anxiously waiting for me. Father doesn't know that I am thus lying on the ground. Even if he comes to know of it what will he do? He is blind and cannot walk. So you yourself go to my father and give him the information. But take care that he may not destroy you. Try to appease him, so that he may not curse you in anger. Your arrow has struck my heart, as the river strikes against a sandy coast, and it is giving me great pain. Just extract it from there."

"When the hermit-boy asked me to extract the arrow I was in a dilemma, if the arrow remained there it would give him more pain, but if I drew it out he would die immediately."

"At last the hermit-boy began to sink. His eyes were turned up and his limbs became listless. Seeing me thus overwhelmed with grief the ascetic with great difficulty said, 'O, King! Remove from your mind the idea that you have killed a Brahman, for I am not so. I am born of a Vaishya father and a Sudra mother."

"I then extracted the arrow from his heart and he began to roll in agony and he gave up his life by fixing his scared look on me. I was overwhelmed with great sorrow."

"I was struck with deep remorse and greatly repented for my act, and long thought what was the best thing to do. At last, I took up the pitcher filled with water and went to the hermitage. There I found the blind and infirm hermit-couple, like helpless birds with their wings clipped. There was no body else who could move them from one place to another. At that time they were talking about their son. Though I had destroyed all their hopes still they were waiting for their son's return with water. I was already extremely distressed with sorrow and remorse, but on entering the hermitage I felt myself more wretched."

"The old hermit hearing the sound of my foot-

steps mistook me for his son and said, 'Why are you so late, my boy ? Bring the water soon, your mother was greatly anxious for your delay in the river. You are our only support, and the eyes of the blind. Our lives depend upon you. But why are you silent ? Why don't you reply to my words."

"I was greatly alarmed at this, and concealing my real feeling I said with difficulty,

"O sage, I am Dasarath of Kshattriya race. I am not your son. I have committed a very hateful act and I am extremely sorry and repentant for it. Sir, I was waiting on the banks of the Saruja for killing elephants and other animals that might come for drink at night. Then I heard a gurgling noise. I thought that an elephant was drinking water, and hit an arrow aiming at the sound. But coming on to the edge of the river I found a hermit-boy lying on the ground. At his words I took out the arrow from his heart, and he died lamenting for his old parents, as soon as the arrow was drawn out. O Sage ! I have killed your son without my knowledge. What has been done can not be undone. Now command me what I am to do ?"

"The sage could have reduced me to ashes then and there but he forbore and said, 'O King, if you did not come to inform me, your head would have crumbled down from your shoulders. Not to speak of a Kshattriya, such an impious act committed with knowledge could have dragged down Indra from his

throne. You are still alive because you have committed the act through inadvertance or you would have been destroyed with your family. However, take us to the place where my son is lying prostrate.' "

"Then I took them to the bank of the Saraju and made them touch the body of their son, whereupon they fell upon the dead body of their son, and began to cry bitterly."

The hermit said, 'Why don't you greet us today? Why are you lying on the ground? Are you angry with us? Cast your eyes on your mother. Why don't you embrace her and talk to her? Henceforth whose sweet chanting of the Sastras shall I listen to? Who will offer oblations into fire in the evening and bathe us? I am old, infirm and absolutely helpless. Who will now procure me fruits and roots? How shall I maintain your mother? I ask you not to go alone to the abode of Death. Tomorrow we all three shall go there. We shall soon die in your absence. I shall go to the region of Death and speak to Death himself, and ask him to excuse me. Alas! you are innocent and sinless but this sinful Kshattriya has killed you but through my force of truth you will attain the happy region attained by the heroes after death. Dost thou attain the same state as has been attained by emperors, Sagar, Saiva, Dilip, Janmejaya, Nahush, and Dhundhumar. Your will be the blissful state that is obtained

after death by the study of the Vedas, penance, devotion to a single wife,* gift of lands and thousands of kine, serving the guru, or by the observance of religious rites and fasting. But he who has killed you will attain evil state after death.' "

"Thus saying, the ascetic with his wife performed the watery rites for their son."

"After this the pious son of the hermit assuming a celestial form ascended the heaven with Indra and consoled his old parents saying that he had attained the highest heaven by serving them and asked them to come to him without delay."

"Thereafter the hermit with his wife performing the watery rites of their son said, 'Oh King,, kill me now. You have killed my only son so I won't feel any pain of death but hear my curse. As I die from the grief for the death of my son so you will die from grief for your own son.' "

"The hermit after cursing me got into the funeral pyre with his wife and ascended heaven thereby,"

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* Strict monogamy was held in great esteem, Siva thus blesses Parvati, "May you obtain a husband solely devoted to you"—Kalidas.

CHAPTER XXVI.

DASARATH'S DEATH.

"Oh queen, the sin I have committed through ignorance in my childhood has now revived in my memory, and as unhealthy food produces disease so this evil act will produce its due consequence."

Dasarath paused and again burst forth in tears, "Oh queen, surely I shall die of this intense grief for my son. I can no more see any thing, please touch my body. It is not possible to meet any one after death. I could survive if Ram touched me now. I have behaved improperly towards Rama and I justly suffer for it. Oh queen ! I can not see you anymore, my memory is failing and I am finding the angels of death hovering about me and urging me towards the dreadful abode of death. Alas ! I shall no more see Rama. As the sun dries up drops of water so absence of Rama is scorching my soul. I consider them to be (as lucky as) gods who will witness Ram's face after fourteen years of exile, with eyes expanded as the lotus petal, well-drawn brows, beautiful teeth and graceful nose and countenance as beautiful as the autumnal moon. I feel I am rapidly sinking and my senses can no more feel sound, taste or touch. For want of consciousness my senses are becoming

benumbed as the light of a lamp grows dim for want of oil. As the impetuous current of a river destroys its bank, so this internal grief will bring about my end. Oh Ram, my darling! Where are you now? Oh Kausalya! I do not see you any more. Ah, Sumitra! Oh cruel Kaikeyi!" Thus lamenting the King breathed his last at midnight in the presenee of Kausalya and Sumitra.

When the night was over, eulogists, bards, geneologists, and singers came to the palace and began to sing the praise of the King and the palm players began to strike their palms by reciting the deeds of the previous King. At the sound of their claps the birds, perched on the trees, were roused from sleep and began to chirp. The Vinas began to be played and pure charactered woman skilled in service came there, and persons acquainted with the rites of bath brought water in golden pitchers perfumed with Harisandal scent. For auspiciousness, chaste women and virgins brought Ganges water, wearing apparel, and ornaments and cows for being touched. All waited with those articles for the King till the sunrise. But they grew apprehensive as they were disappointed by delay.

Then the queens that were near about Dasarath tried to rouse the King by gentle words, but they found no beating of his heart or pulse. They were greatly alarmed about the King's life and began to tremble like the blades of grass. They then con-

cluded, perhaps last night's apprehensions of the King came to be true.

Being prostrate with grief for their sons Kausalya and Sumitra were still asleep. Ram's mother was lying by the King by contracting her body. She looked pale and dark like a star hid in darkness. Sumitra's face was stained with tears.

Finding them asleep other women began to cry, and Kausalya's and Sumitra's sleep was broken.. They rose from the bed but when they touched the body of the King they shrieked and fell on the ground.

Kausalya rolled on the ground and being covered with dusts she looked like a star dropped from the sky.

Kaikeyi and others lost their sense by incessantly crying for their husband.

All were frightened by the cries that rose from the palace. Dasarath in his death looked like an extinguished fire, and as a dried up ocean.

Kausalya then took Dasarath's head on her lap and addressing Kaikeyi said in tearful eyes, "Now you attain your object of desire and enjoy the kingdom by getting rid of all your thorns. You have destroyed the clan of Raghu, and Kuvja is at the root of it. You know not that through your greed you have taken poison administered by another."

The counsellors seeing Kausalya crying thus by

embracing the dead body of the King they removed the body from that place according to the direction of Vasistha and other Brahmins and preserved the body carefully by immersing it in oil, for there was no son to perform the funeral obsequies of the King.

The counsellors placed the corpse in a vat full of oil and they burst forth in tears saying, "Oh King, we have already lost sweet-speeched and truthful Ram, why have you then left us so? We have been all stranded by your death."

The city looked gloomy in absence of the King, Men and women cursed Kaikeyi and shed tears for the King. Thus the day declined in sorrow.

CHAPTER XXVII.

VASISTHA'S ADVICE.

When the long night of sorrow was over, the great saint Markandeya, Vamadev, Kasyapa, Gautama, Jabali and other Brahmins came to the Royal court and discussed various matters concerning the administration with the ministers.

They being unable to decide anything themselves submitted to Vasistha,

"King Dasarath is dead. Ram has repaired to the forest with Lakshman and Sita. Bharat and Satrughna are now in their maternal uncle's house at Rajagriha. It is incumbent to install one of Ikshaku's line on the throne or the kingdom will precipitate into ruin in the absence of a King. Where there is no King, the clouds do not rain there; seeds are not sown, the son does not obey the father, nor wife the husband, and it is always difficult to protect their wealth and women. Great mischiefs ensue to the people. In a kingless country nobody feels inclined to build a house, or to construct a garden, or to gather in assemblies. In a kingless realm, Brahmins cease to perform their sacrifice, and all festivities end there. Actors, dancers desist from showing their skill and

social progress ceases there. In a kingless country business men are disappointed in their expectation of wealth, and persons versed in ancient lore give up reciting those things for want of an audience. In a kingless city, young maidens decked in gold do not go to the garden in the evening for their sport. In a kingless country cowherds and cultivators do not sleep at night by keeping their doors open nor pleasure-seeking people go out in their swift cars in company of bright women. In a kingless country merchants are afraid to move with their merchandise to distant places and no one can hear the clappings of persons engaged in archery. In a kingless city, big tuskers of sixty years old do not ply along the streets with tinkling bells round their necks. In a kingless country one can not protect what he has nor can procure what he does not possess. In a kingless country, the learned do not discuss the sastras, and pious people have little heart for offering Dakshina-garlands or sweets for the worship of deities. In a kingless city princes besmeared with sandal and aguru do not appear like vernal trees."

"A kingdom without a king is in fact a river without water, a forest without grass, a cow without a cowherd. In this state it is difficult to preserve one's life and men destroy each other as the fish do among themselves. The atheists who are punished for slighting religion raise their heads

in this state of anarchy. The King is the eye of the people, as the eye protects the body from injury and contributes to its welfare so the King protects the people. He is the protector of truth and religion and upholder of social dignity. If there were no King—a judge of right and wrong—then there would be no distinction between things as when enveloped in utter darkness. In a kingless country disputants can not decide their points. As smoke reveals fire, and pinion a chariot, so King Dasarath represented the kingdom through him. Now he is dead. We therefore ask for your advice."

Vasistha hearing these words said, "Bharat upon whom tne King has conferred the kingdom, is now residing at his maternal uncle's place with Satrughna. Let us send envoys on swift horses to him."

Vasistha then addressing the envoys named, Siddhartha, Vijay, and Asakenandan said, "Remove your sorrow, go to King Kekaya with silken apparels and ornaments and tell Bharat on my behalf to come immediately by giving him to understand that delay may frustrate that business but take care don't speak about Ram's exile and Dasarath's death."

Then the envoys being furnished with the necessaries left for Kekaya, as directed by Vasishtha. After crossing the Malini they proceeded by the west of Apartala and went towords the north of Pralamva.

Then crossing the Ganges at Hastinapura and arriving at Panchala they went westward through Kurujangal and on their way they saw vast expanses of water strewn with full blown lotuses, and met translucent streams. After crossing the Saradanda they bowed to the satyopayachana tree on its bank and then entered the city of Kulinga.

After passing through Teyobhibhavana they arrived at Abhikala. They then crossed the Ikshumati. They then went through Vahllika towards the Sadaman hill, there they saw the foot-prints of Vishnu, and then passed the Vipasha and the Shamali streams. They met on their way elephants, lions, tigers, deer and various other animals and after proceeding some distance they reached the city of Girivraja.*

*Modern Rajgirh near Patna.

N. B. Re page 261.

Guhak Chandal, though the expression does not occur in Sanskrit, is the Bengali equvalent for Guha, the Nishada chief, and the gentleman (a graduate to boot!) entrusted with the proofs, thought it was an oversight on my part and he corrected Guha into Guhak every where! This is how the silly mistake has crept in. What's in a name? It smells as sweet, he might argue, but arrangements have already been made to ensure better proof-readings in future. Along with this please read deities for duties in p 38, line 6, and bow for how in the last line of page 266.—Translator.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

BHARAT.

The very night the envoys entered the city, Bharat had a bad dream towards the dawn and he became anxious for it. His friends tried to remove his anxiety by their conversations.

Some one played on Vina, some caused the dancing girls to dance before Bharat, some read mirth-provoking comedies, but Bharat could not join them in their jollities.

At last, a bosom-friend of his asked, "My friend! Why do you look so indifferent inspite of the attempts of your friends to cheer you up?"

Bharat said, "Hear me, why I feel anxious to-day. Towards the end of the night I saw my father in a dream. He looked pale, and I saw him falling headlong from a mountain peak into a filthy pit* and I saw him floating on that dirty stream and drinking oil from the hollow of his joined palms with a laugh! I then saw him diving into oil with an oily body, after partaking, with a bent down head, rice mixed with oil again and again! I also beheld as if the ocean had grown dry, the moon has fallen

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* In the original—a lake full of cow-dung.

on the ground; as if the earth had been enveloped in darkness, burning fire had abruptly been extinguished, the earth riven, trees and mountains destroyed with smoke, and the tusks of the elephant on which the King rides had fallen into pieces! And I saw my father clad in sable clothes seated on a dark iron seat, and dark, tawny women were beating him! He was driving fast, wearing a red garland, towards the south in a car yoked with asses! Women clad in red were laughing at him, and grim-visaged Rakshasis were dragging him by force! I had such an awful dream towards the close of the night. Now, it is certain that one of us either the King, Ram, Lakshman, Satrughna or myself must die. The smoke of the funeral pyre of the person is soon seen to rise, who is seen in a dream driving in a car yoked with asses. I have grown anxious for this, this is why I am not greeting you with my speech. My throat has become perched. Though at present I do not find any cause of fear yet I am apprehending danger at every step. I have got a grating voice, and feel my life as vapid! And my heart is not at ease at this quite unexpected dream, and my apprehensions about the King can not be allayed."

When Bharat was narrating his dream to his friends, the fatigued envoys entered the well-protected, beautiful city of Rajgriha and appeared before King Kekaya and Judhajit, and after receiving

their hospitality they came to Bharat. After greeting him duly they said, "O Prince! Vasistha and the ministers enquire about your welfare, and they have asked you to set out immediately as there is a very urgent matter which may be defeated by delay, and you will have to attend to that. We have brought costly apparels and ornaments, present them to your maternal grandfather and maternal uncle."

Bharat after accepting the articles asked, "How is the King doing? Are worshipful Ram and Lakshman safe? Is everything all right with virtuous Kausalya and Sumitra? How is my mother Kaikeyi proud of her attainments?"

The envoys humbly replied, "They are all doing well. Now Kamala, the goddess of fortune, craves your presence, please ask to get your chariot immediately ready."

Bharat then went to inform his maternal grandfather and said, "Envoys have come for me. I shall now go to my father and shall come back again when you send for me."

Then King Kekaya kissing Bharat's head replied,

"Kaikeyi has obtained the happiness of getting a worthy son in you. I give you leave to go. Communicate to your parents, Vasistha, Ram, Lakshman and others that we are doing well."

After this, King Kekaya presented to Bharat excellent elephants, variegated blankets, deerskins, domesticated dogs, big and strong like tigers and endowed

with formidable teeth. He also gave him two thousand beads of gold, and sixteen hundred horses, swift asses, and also a number of servants for Bharat's retinue.

But Bharat grew highly anxious on account of his evil dream and for the hurry of the envoys. With Satrughna, Bharat then set out from his quarters after greeting his maternal grandfather, Judhajit and other relations.

After a journey of seven nights Bharat arrived in front of Ayodhya. And at the sight of Ayodhya, Bharat spoke to his charioteer :

"Look, there the famous city of Ayodhya ! But from distance it appears to be cheerless to-day ! It is a crowded city, but how is it that it looks like a deserted one ! Even the soil of Ayodhya seems to be dark ! Formerly, there was a great din in the city, but everything seems to be hushed in silence to-day ! Formerly, pleasure-seeking people used to enter these gardens in the evening and leave them in the morning, but they seem to be in mourning for their absence ! O charioteer ! The city appears to me like a forest to-day ! I do not see important persons going through the streets on their elephants or horses. Bowers and other abodes of pleasure where inebriated lovers meet, seem to be solitary and silent ! Leaves are falling off from every road-side tree, and the sweet notes of birds are no more to be heard, bracing air seems no more to blow laden with the perfume of Sandal

Aguru and incense! Why musical instruments have ceased to be played? I find ominous signs all around! My heart acheth at the sight!"

Saying these, with an anxious and depressed heart Bharat entered the city through the Vaijayanta gate.

At his sight the sentries stood up and after saluting him followed him out of respect. Bharat asked them to return to their posts, and he said to his charioteer:

"Why the envoys betrayed such indecent haste? I have dark misgivings in my mind. My anxiety is growing more intense. I see around me all inauspicious signs. Temples are not decorated with wreaths and flowers. The courts are unclean. Merchants have closed their shops, all business seem to have stopped! I find the people no more gay as before, but sad and anxious."

With these words Bharat entered the palace and he was greatly shocked by the cheerless look of the great city.

With a depressed heart and downcast look Bharat entered his father's quarters but missing him there he went to his mother.

CHAPTER XXIX.

BHARAT AND KAIKEYI.

Kaikeyi seeing her son returned home, rose from her golden seat in delight. Bharat too bowed to her on entering the room.

Kaikyi then embraced him and after kissing his head asked him fondly, "Tell me, my boy! When you left your maternal uncle's place? Don't you feel fatigued by the journey? How are your maternal grandfather and uncle doing? Were you not happy in your stay at there?"

Lotus-eyed Bharat replied, "Mother! Seven nights hence I left the city of my maternal grandfather. Your father and brother are doing well. My men have been borne down with fatigue in carrying the presents of Kekaya King to me. I have, therefore, come ahead of them. However, I now ask you one thing. Why the emissaries of my father have brought me so hurriedly here? Your golden bedstead appears to be vacant. Father often lives in your quarters but why I do not find him to-day. I want to bow down at his feet, tell me where he is now? Is he now in mother Kausalya's place? I

do not find any one of the Ikshwaku family in good spirits. What is the cause of this ?"

Thereupon, Kaikeyi being exceedingly delighted at the prospect of Bharat's kingdom said, "My boy, that perfomer of sacrifices, the refuge of the good, the King has attained the inevitable end of all creatures."

"Ah alas !" Bharat exclaimed in sorrow and fainted on the ground with outstretched arms.

Then Kaikeyi finding her son prostrate on the ground, like a cut down tree, raised him up and affectionately said, "My boy ! Why are you lying on the ground ? Just arise. A cultured man like you is never overwhelmed with grief. Your intelligence never leaves you as brightness never leaves the solar disc."

Bharat wept long, rolling on the dust. Then addressing his mother, Bharat said,

"Mother ! I went to maternal uncle's house with the happy thought that father would install Ram on the throne, but I see every thing has been altered. Mother ! My father has died of what disease in my absence ? Alas ! Where is he who used to brush off dust from my childish limbs ? Happy are they who performed the last rites of my father. However, now inform Ram immediately of my arrival, he is my brother, a friend, and father to me. I am his devoted servant. I shall bow down at Ram's feet, he is my refuge. Now tell me what were the last words of the King. I am most eager to hear them."

Kaikeyi said, "Your father breathed his last, saying, 'Alas, Ram! Alas, Lakshman! Alas, Sita!" And smarting under the grip of death the King said, "They are happy who will witness Ram returned to Ayodhya with Lakshman and Janaki."

Bharat asked, "Mother! Where is virtuous Ram now putting up with Sita and Lakshman?"

Then Kaikeyi thinking that Bharat would be glad at the news of Ram's exile, said, "My child, the prince clad in bark has repaired to the Dandaka forest with Lakshman and Sita."

Bharat was fully acquainted with the customs of his family and at these words he grew apprehensive about the conduct of Ram and anxiously asked,

"Has Ram robbed a Brahmana of his property? Has he injured any innocent man, whether rich or poor? Did he take any fancy on another's wife? Now tell me, why he has been banished to the Dandaka forest?"

Then his proud, volatile mother cheerfully observed, "Ram has not robbed a Brahman, nor he has injured any innocent person. He has not even eyed any body's wife, but, my boy! hearing of his installation I prayed to the King for Ram's exile and your installation on the throne. The King had promised me two boons previously, so for the observance of truth he has conferred the kingdom on you. Ram is now in exile with Sumitra's son and Sita. The King died being separated from his favourite son. You

now ascend the throne. I have done all these for you. This city and the kingdom now belong to you. Shake off your sorrows. Perform the funeral rites with the help of Brahmans versed in rituals and then ascend the throne."

CHAPTER XXX.

BHARAT'S REPLY.

Hearing these shocking things Bharata with deep remorse said, "Alas ! At one and the same time I have lost my father and father-like brother. What shall I do with the kingdom ? You have banished my brother and killed my father, thus brought sorrow upon sorrow, as is done when salt is applied to wound. You are the destroyer of our clan. You have strewn the path of happiness of this family with thorns. Virtuous Ram used to love and respect you as his own mother. Even far-sighted mother Kausalya looked upon you as her sister, and you have sent her son into exile. What benefit you have thereby gained ? You are too greedy. Perhaps you know not how I looked upon Ram ? How shall 1 protect the kingdom without Ram and Lakshman ? I would not have hesitated to abandon you if Ram did not look upon you as his mother. How could you have such a wicked intention, foreign to our family traditions ? In our family, it is the eldest son that ascends the throne while others remain under him. It now appears that you are not conversant even with the laws of sovereignty. How could you being born of a king have forgotten this ? Your intentions, however,

will never be fulfilled. I shall immediately bring back Ram and shall live as his slave."

Bharat began to growl like a lion in grief and anger.

Bharat again resumed in wrath, "You cruel woman! Leave the kingdom at once. You are impious and you have no right to weep for your husband. What great offence Ram and Dasarath had committed to you that you have sent one to exile and another to death? You have committed such a great sin by banishing Ram to the forest that I am afraid I shall incur public odium for being your son. You have put me into eternal disgrace. You are my enemy in the form of my mother. Don't utter my name by those lips. It is for you that I have become fatherless and an object of public derision.

"To what pit of hell thou art condemned for depriving virtuous Kausalya of her son? Don't you know that eldest Ram is dear unto all? A son born of the limbs of his mother comes from her heart, therefore he is dearer to her mother than all other relations."

"Just listen to a story. Once upon a time the celestial cow Surabhi while going through the heavenly region beheld two of her sons were yoked to the plough. Seeing them fatigued on account of ploughing the field up till noon, she became extremely sorry and began to shed tears. At that time Indra was passing below her and drops of her tears fell

upon Indra's body. Indra then looked up and found Surabhi weeping. Indra grew highly anxious at this and enquired whether the Gods were well, and as to why she was weeping. Surabhi replied that there was nothing to fear about the Gods but pointing her sons she said, "Look there, how my two sons are labouring hard in that undulating field. I have been greatly distressed by their sufferings. There is no dearer thing than one's issue."

From that time Indra realised son to be the dearest thing in life and entertained great regard for Surabhi. Now consider if Surabhi inspite of innumerable sons could be so sorry as that what would be the condition of Kausalya having one son only? You will have to suffer for the sin of robbing her of her only son. Now, after performing the obsequies of my father I shall bring back Ram from the forest and I shall myself embrace the forest-life. I shall consider myself fortunate and my stain will be removed if I succeed in bringing back Ram to Ayodhya."

Bharat then began to breathe heavily with anger and sorrow, and he threw away all ornaments from his body. And he fell down like banner of Sakra after the festivity was over.*

* Sometimes great festivities were held in honour of Indra-worship. Indian theatres owe their origin to these festivities. When the festivities were over the flag-staff that was raised in honour of Indra was pulled down.

CHAPTER XXXI.

BHARAT AND KAUSALYA.

After regaining senses after a long time Bharat said to the ministers casting a tearful look on his mother, "I did not hanker for the kingdom nor I deputed my mother for it. I was living far away with Satrughna so I could not even know that the King made arrangements for the installation of Ram, nor I was aware that Ram has thus been sent into exile with Lakshman and Janaki."

When Bharat was taking his mother to task, Kausalya hearing the voice of Bharat told Sumitra, "The son of crooked Kaikeyi, Bharat, has come." Bharat is far-sighted and I wish to see him once. Saying this Kausalya in trembling gait repaired to Bharat. At that time Bharat being desirous of seeing Kausalya, was proceeding with Satrughna to her quarters. Kausalya met him on the way and embraced him in tearful eyes and then addressing Bharat said, "You hankered after kingdom, now enjoy it without any thorn. Your mother has obtained the kingdom by extremely cruel means. I know not what she has gained by sending away Ram to the forest. Now let her send me there where Ram with navel of golden hue resides. Or I shall myself

go there with Sumitra or you take me there where Ram is engaged in religious meditations. This vast kingdom now belongs to you."

When Kausalya used these hard words Bharat felt pained like one whose sores are pricked with a needle and he fainted at Kausalya's feet.

After regaining consciousness Bharat said with folded palms, "Oh worshipful lady, I don't know anything about it. I am quite innocent of this. Then why do you censure me for this? Don't you know that I have great and unflinching devotion and affection for Ram? What shall I say more, the person according to whose wish truthful Ram has gone to the forest though his (or her) intelligence be refined by the Sastras, he will be a slave to vice and sin. May he answer the calls of nature facing the sun or kick a sleeping cow. May he reap that sin which is incurred by a master who does not pay his servant after the work is done, or the sin that is committed in the attempt of injuring the king, who governs his subject like his son, or the sin that befalls a king who does not govern well by taking a sixth part of the income of his subjects, or the sin that befalls a man who denies Dakshina after the sacrifice. May he not live long till Ram's restoration to the throne who has sent long-armed, broad-shouldered Ram, bright as the sun and the moon to the forest. May he who has approved of Ram's exile may feed on Payasha, Krishara and goat's flesh

which have not been offered in sacrifice. Oh noble lady, who has approved of Ram's exile may he live in luxury but without any issue and without getting a desirable wife. May he incur the shame that befalls a person who kills a King, a woman, a boy or an old man, or the demerit of a person who forsakes a trusted servant. Who has sent Ram to forest let him maintain his family by selling lac, iron, honey, meat and poison. May he beg for his bread like a nomadic, clad in rags and holding a skull in his hands. May he be addicted to wine, woman and dice, may he be overwhelmed with passion and anger. May he be robbed of all his wealth by robbers, may he incur the demerit as he who sleeps both in the morning and in the evening, and may he reap the sin that is reaped by an incendiary or who commit adultery with his preceptor's wife, or who wrongs his friends. Let him be addicted to all sorts of evils and let him suffer from infirmity and poverty being saddled with a big family. He will disregard his own chaste wife close by him after ablutions at the end of her monthly course, and will incur the demerit like him who kills a cow having a young calf. He will reap the sin like one who fouls drinking water, administers poison, refuses drink to a thirsty person having water in his possession, or who quarrels about their respective faiths and gods as well as he who listens to those dispute."

Kausalya, then, said, "Oh my son, your words pain me more. I know you have not swerved from virtue, and for this reason you will attain noble region of pious men."

Thus saying Kausalya took Bharat on her lap and began to weep bitterly. Bharat's heart was rent with sorrow and he began to heave repeatedly deep sighs.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE CREMATION.

When the day dawned Vasistha said to Bharat, "O prince! It is useless to lament any more. Now it is time to cremate the body of the King; therefore, make arrangements for it."

Bharat then bowed to Vasistha and placed the body on the ground, raising it from the oil vat. Dasarath's face was pale and he looked as if buried in sleep. Seeing the body of the King thus prostrate on the ground, Bharat broke forth being overwhelmed with grief,

"O King! What wrong thou hast committed by banishing Ram and Lakshman during my absence? I have been already deprived of Ram, now where have you gone leaving this poor soul? Ram has gone to the forest and you too are dead, who can now devote himself to the task of protecting what the people possess and in securing what they do not? Oh! father, the earth has been widowed by your death, and the city looks like a gloomy moonless night."

Vasistha, seeing Bharat bewailing thus, said, "Oh prince, don't be overwhelmed with grief but perform the funeral rites of the King with an undisturbed mind."

Then Bharat at the words of Vasistha asked the Ritwigas, priests, and Acharyas to make haste. Ritwigas and priests began to offer oblations into the fire that had already been brought out from the fire chamber.

Then the servants in sorrowful hearts carried the body of the King to the bank of the Saraju in a car. A large number of people went ahead distributing gold, silver and clothes. In the meantime the funeral pyre was prepared with incense, sandal, Agaru, Sarala, Padmaka, Devadaru and other fragrant things. The Ritwigas placed the body of the King in the funeral pyre and began to utter "mantras" offering oblations into the fire for the purification of the King in the next world. Singers of Samaveda began to sing the Sama-hymns. The queens and the aged people came in their litters, went round the King with the Ritwigas and were crying like Crounchis.

Then the queens bathed in the Saraju and performed with Bharat the watery rites for the dead and entering the city they passed ten days in great privations, by lying on the ground at night.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE FUNERAL RITES.

After the passing of ten days, Bharat performed the Sradh Ceremony of the King and on the twelvth day for the welfare of the King in the next world, Bharat performed Sapindakaran ceremony of the second month, and for the spiritual welfare of his father conferred on the Brahmins profuse wealth, food, goats, cows, servants, horses and cars.

On the thirteenth day Bharat came to the bank of the Saraju to gather the ashes of his father and being overwhelmed with grief began to cry aloud and seeing the crimsoned spot covered with ashes and embers where the bones of his father had been reduced to ashes and thus occurred the dissolution of his body, Bharat fainted in sorrow. People raised him up as they do the fallen banner of Indra. Satrughana too became mad with sorrow seing Bharat thus smitten with grief. He walked up and down in restless steps saying, "We are now overwhelmed in this sea of sorrow that owes its origin to Manthara, whose fierce monster is Kaikeyi. Where hast thou gone leaving tender-hearted Bharat, who will now look after us ? Strange that the Earth was not rent into pieces after losing

her virtuous lord like you ! Alas ! You are dead and Ram has gone to the forest, how can we live then ? I shall cast myself into flames and shall never return to Ayodhya in a fatherless and brotherless state, but will repair to the forest."

The people were greatly distressed hearing Bharat and Satrughna lamenting thus, and the two princes rolled on the earth like two bulls in agony having their horns broken.

Then Vasistha raised Bharat from the ground and addresing him said, "O prince, this is the thirteenth day since the cremation of your father. The only thing remains to be done is to collect his bones. Why do you delay then ? It is not proper for you to be overwhelmed with grief since hunger, thirst, grief, ignorance, infirmity and death are inevitable in human life."

Then Bharat and Satrughna wiped off their eyes and looked like a banner of Indra sullied by wind and rain.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE RESOLUTION OF BHARAT.

Then Sumitra's son, Satrughna, finding Bharat resolved to go to Ram, said, "There is no doubt that Ram who gives shelter to all in distress, is our refuge. A woman has sent such Ram to the forest. Worshipful Lakshman is powerful, why did he not deliver Ram by subduing father? The King who takes to unrighteous course at the words of a woman deserves to be suppressed even from the moral point of view."

When Satrughna was saying this to Bharat, the hump-backed came near the door, wearing royal robes and besmearing her limbs with sandal paste, and adorning her body with ornaments; and for having put on a girdle round her waist she looked like a female monkey tied with a rope.

Seeing that vicious hump-backed at the door Satrughna dragged her by force and said, to Bharat,

"Here is that vicious hump-backed wench, the cause of Ram's exile, and father's death, do with her as you please."

Satrughna, always obedient to Bharat's words addressing the inmates said, "This sorceress has brought miseries to our father and brothers let her now feel the consequence."

Saying this, Satrughna. took the hump-backed by force and she began to resound the house with her piteous cries. Her maids got frightened at Satrughna's anger and fearing a similar fate took shelter under Kausalya.

Satrughna began to drag Manthara by force and all her ornaments fell from her body, and the floor of the room with scattered ornaments looked like the autumnal sky strewn with the stars. Satrughna began to oppress Manthara by force and to abuse Kaikeyi in harsh words. Kaikeyi was greatly alarmed at this and sought protection of Bharat.

Then Bharat seeing Satrughna beside himself with rage said, "A woman should not be killed, so forgive her. I would have killed Kaikeyi, but Ram would despise me as the murderer of my mother. So if you kill this hump-backed woman he won't speak with us in derision."

At these words Satrughna desisted from the reproachful act and let Manthara off. As soon as Manthara was released she threw herself at Kaikeyi's feet and began to cry piteously.

On the morning of the 14th day, a large number of people collected and said to Bharat,

"Who was our supreme Lord, King Dasarath has gone to heaven by banishing Ram and Lakshman, so you be our King from to-day. The kingdom though now is without a King wont come to ruins if the counsellers act with united opinions. The

counsellors are waiting for you with all the articles of coronation, so ascend the throne and save us from miseries."

Bharat seeing the articles of coronation said, "Eldest son should ascend the throne, that is the custom of our family. So you should not request me about it. Worshipful Ram should ascend the throne and I shall myself repair to the forest and live there for fourteen years. Now ask my army to get ready, I shall myself bring back Ram from the forest. I shall carry with me the articles of coronation and have him crowned in the forest and shall bring him thence as fire from the place of sacrifice. I shall never fulfil the desire of this so-called mother. Let the artizans prepare my way for the forest. Let them level the uneven paths, and let men capable of going to difficult and inaccessible places accompany me."

Hearing Bharat speaking thus all the people collected there said, "May you be prosperous since you have so nobly resolved to confer the throne on the eldest." And they shed tears in joy.

CHAPTER XXXV.

BHARAT'S JOURNEY.

Then carpenters, wood cutters, expert diggers, builders, cobblers, cooks, perfumers, makers of machines and bamboo made articles, people acquainted with geography, active servants, and forward guides started in advance. When throngs of people rushed outin joy they resembled like the waves of an agitated ocean heaved up by the full moon. The pioneers with axes and spades went ahead and made paths by clearing the jungles. They cut down many trees, shrubs and rocks, and planted trees where there was none. They levelled many high grounds and filled many deep ditches. Some built bridges, some bored earth and rocks for water and pounded stones into fine dusts. They dug wells with raised diases in waterless places. And the way of his army lay through many white plastered pavements, through woods bearing blossoms and rendered vocal by the notes of wild birds. The road was decorated with flags and flowers, and sprinkled with sandal showers, thus it appeared like a heavenly path.

Those who received orders of pitching tents, set their tents under auspicious stars in the

places abounding in sweet fruits, and decorated them profusely. The tents were then surrounded by moats and were decorated with images of Saphire.

Somewhere palaces were built, ramparts with dove-cots were raised and sevenstoried towers were raised, on both sides of which stood various kinds of trees and tanks with crystal waters and full of fishes.

Towards the end of the night preceding the day on which Bharat was to be consecrated for the Coronation Ceremony, eulogists began to sing praises of Bharat. Kettle drums were struck by golden sticks and hundreds of conch shells were blown to announce the break of the day. Then Bharat rose with a sorrowful heart and asked to stop the music saying, "You must know that I am not the King."

Then addressing Satrughna he said, "You see they have been incited by Kaikeyi in these unjust things. Father has gone to the next world leaving me to infinite miseries and who is our master has been banished to the forest. There would not have been such a chaos if he were here."

While saying this Bharat was overwhelmed with grief.

Then Vasistha versed in statecraft entered the Court ornamented with gold and gems and sat down

upon a golden seat adorned with an elegant cover. He asked the warders soon to fetch Bharat, Satrughna, counsellors and captains. Then intelligent Bharat entered the court full of educated people, rendered bright by the brilliance of their dress and ornaments, which looked like a fullmoon-atumnal night.

Seeing Bharat entering the court, Vasistha said,

"King Dasarath has repaired to Heaven by conferring the earth full of wealth and corns on you. Now get yourself crowned and rule the kingdom."

Prince Bharat was overwhelmed at Vasistha's speech and thinking of Ram he replied in a voice choked with tears,

"How a man like myself can usurp the throne of virtuous Ram, and how being born of King Dasarath will rob one of his kingdom ? This kingdom and myself belong to Ram. Oh ! hermit, it is not proper for you to speak to me thus. Eldest Ram, like Dilip and Nahusa, is the best of us all. If I follow this unrighteous course leading to Hell I shall be a stain to the Ikshaku line. I do not in any way approve of the wrong committed by my mother, and from here I bow down to Ram with my clasped palms. He is the real King of this kingdom and I must follow him."

The courtiers then shed tears in delight at these words of Bharat.

Then Bharat addressing the people said, "If I can not bring Ram from the forest I shall live with him like Lakshman. I shall have to make all necessary arrangements in your presence to bring him back. I have already despatched in advance honorary labourers, active servants and guards, now I shall set out myself."

Saying this Bharat, attached to his brother, asked Sumantra to announce his departure to the forest and to mobilise his forces for that. The people and the chieftains were extremely glad at the proposal of bringing back Ram. And wife of every soldier cheerfully spurred her husband to make haste in the matter. Then Captains sent troops to Bharat in swift conveyances.

Bharat then asked Sumantra to fetch his car soon, and to tell the Captains to draw up the forces in marching array.

When the day dawned, Bharat, eager to meet Ram, started in his car, and before him proceeded the counsellors and the priests. Thousands of horses and elephants followed him. Kausalya, Kaikeyi and Sumitra gladly accompanied him in glittering cars. The citizens embraced each other in joy and said when they would see Ram, dark as a cloud and the remover of world's grief. "As the sun dispells all darkness, so his very sight will remove all our sorrows," they said.

Then, famous merchants, jewellers, potters, weav-

ers, smiths, sawers, workers with peacock-feathers,* glass makers, perforators of gems, workers in ivory, wool-growers, armourers, persons expert in mixing cement, perfumers, goldsmiths, shampooers, physicians, helpers in bath, incense makers, wine-sellers, washermen, tailors, actors with a number of gay women, cooks, fishermen, persons versed in the Vedas, virtuous Brahmans followed Bharat in carts being attired in their best apparels, daubed in red unguent powder.

After passing a long distance they arrived at Sringaverapur on the bank of the Ganges. There Guha, the Nishada chief, was ruling the province with his kinsmen. Then Bharat's army came to the Ganges full of Chakravakas. Bharat asked his men to halt there and he wished to perform Tarpan for the spiritual good of his father. After disposing his men Bharat thought of the means by which he would be able to pursuade Ram to return to Ayodhya.

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* The list testifies to the material prosperity of the age. The word is Mayuraka—it may mean, peacock catcher, peacock dancer or worker in peacock feathers.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE MEETING WITH GUHA.

Guha seeing a vast number of people and a mighty force collected on the bank of the Ganges said to his kinsmen, "Look, there is a vast sea of troops, indeed I do not see its end. From that huge Kovidara tree in the flag streaming from the chariot it seems foolish Bharat has come. Perhaps he will first enchain us or kill us first and then will kill exiled Ram. He has intended to kill Ram for securing complete possession of the kingdom. Ram is both my Liege and friend. Now clad yourselves in your armours and wait on the bank of the Ganges. Let my strong retainers get themselves ready to throw obstacles at the time of Bharat's crossing the Ganges. Let hundreds of Kaivarta youths accoutred in mail wait in readiness in five hundred boats. If Bharat has no evil design against Ram his army may safely cross the Ganges."

Having given these directions to his kinsmen, the lord of the Nishadas went to meet Bharat with meat, fish and honey.

Seeing Guha coming to Bharat, Sumantra said, "Look prince! Ram's dear friend Guha is coming

hither with his kinsmen. Let him come to you. This old chief knows everything about the Dandaka forest and he also knows where Ram and Lakshman are now residing."

Bharat at once agreed to Sumantra's proposal.

Then the Nishad-chief cheerfully approached Bharat and addressing him said, "O prince! You may consider this country as your home. You have deceived us not by sending any message beforehand. Now I place all my resources at your disposal, please make yourself comfortable in the house of your servant. The Nishadas have stored wild fruits, fresh and dry meat, and wood-land meal, and I pray let the army sup here to-night and set out in the next morning.

Bharat replied, "My men have been already entertained by your kind wishes, now tell me by what way I shall reach the hermitage of Bharadwaj."

Then Guha replied in folded palms, "The Nishadas are acquainted with all these places, they will go with you and I shall myself accompany you. Now tell me with what intention you are going to Ram? To tell you the truth, the sight of your vast army has rather filled me with great apprehension towards Ram."

Hearing Guha speaking thus, Bharat replied in sweet words, "Let such time never come when I may commit any mischief to Ram. He is my elder

and adorable like my father. I am now repairing to the forest to bring back Ram. I tell you the truth, don't doubt me even for a moment."

The lord of the Nishada was greatly delighted at these words and said,

"O prince! Since you have renounced the kingdom obtained without any effort, all glory be unto you. I don't find anybody like you on earth. Your fame will for ever spread in the three worlds, since you have intended to bring back Ram from miseries,"

When they were thus talking the sun grew dim at the approaeh of night.

Bharat was greatly pleased with Guha's hospitality and retired to bed with Satrughna. Anxious thoughts about Ram began to corrode his heart, as fire burns a forest-tree, hidden in its hollow. As the snowy Himalayas thaws with the heat of the sun, so perspiration bathed his body. He was oppressed by the heavy burden of sorrow, as if he was then seized with mental fever.

Guha tried to console Bharat, and in the course of conversations he spoke about the good qualities of Lakshman, stating that when he assured Lakshman about his friendship and love for Ram and offered himself and his men for the protection of Ram at night, how Lakshman thankfully declined his services and undertook the task himself, saying that he had no need of comfort or rest since

the best of heroes was lying on the ground with his wife; and when Lakshman was bitterly lamenting for the misfortunes that had befallen Ram and Ayodhya the night was over; they then matted their locks and crossed the Ganges through his help."

Hearing this Bharat was deeply buried in thoughts, and shortly after he fainted in grief. At this, the Nishada chief grew pale and began to shake like a tree in earthquake. Satrughna, who was close by, began to shed tears by embracing Bharat. Kausalya and other queens then came near Bharat and began to cry aloud.

Kausalya said with tears, "My boy! Are you ill? The Royal family now depends on you. Ram and Lakshman have gone to the forest. I have sustained my life only by seeing you. The King is dead and you are now our protector."

Bharat soon recovered his senses and asked Guha with tearful eyes, "O, Nishad chief! tell me where worshipful Ram passed the night with Sita? Upon which they lay? Which food they took?"

Guha then narrated everything and said, "O prince! I procured various kinds of fruits and provisions for Ram, but when I offered them to him, he, according to the Kshattriya custom, instead of accepting the presents returned everything, saying with entreaties, 'My friend, it is our duty to give and not take anything.' Then Lakshman brought

water from the Ganges, and after drinking that he fasted with Sita, and Lakshman drank the remnant left after Ram's drink. Then they said their evening prayers with a devoted heart. After the prayer, Lakshman gathered Kusha grass and prepared bed for Ram and when Ram and Janaki lay down he retired from the place after washing their feet. O, Prince! This is the Ingudi tree beneath which Ram passed the night with his wife on this grass."

Hearing these words Bharat saw the bed used by Ram near the Ingudi tree, and then addressing his mothers said, "Look, here noble Ram passed his night, lying on the ground. It was certainly not worthy of him who is born of the great King Dasarath. How can he now lie on the ground who passed his nights on beds furnished with soft skins and excellent cloths? How does he who was in the habit of sleeping in high mansions, in delightfully cold apartments—coloured like pale clouds—with golden floor and silver yard, provided with elegant beds, decked with profusion of flowers, perfumed with sandal and Aguru, and resonant with the notes of the parrots; and who was roused every morning with sweet music, by the jingling sounds of the anklets of famale attendants, and by the songs of praise by captives and bards now lie on the ground? It is difficult to believe that Ram now lies on the ground. It seems like a dream. It seems nothing is

mighter than fate. Here is the bed that still bears the impress of Ram's limbs for changing his sides on it. Look, how the grass over the hard soil has been crushed by the pressure of his limbs. Sita probably lay on this bed, for here and there are still found scattered grains of gold. Surely, at the time of lying down Sita's cloth somehow stuck to it, for silken fibres are still attached to it. Husband's bed is always pleasant to the wife, or how could such a delicate lady lie on it? Ah! blessed is Lakshman for following Ram at such juncture. The King is dead and Ram has gone to the forest, the earth seems to be quite helpless like a boat without a helmsman. From to-day I shall observe the vow of a forest-life, and shall gladly pass fourteen years in the forest by wearing barks, matted locks, and by living on fruits and roots and sleeping on the gound. Satrughna will live with me and worshipful Ram with Lakshman rule over Ayodhya. Let him be crowned by the Brahmans. May my desire be fulfilled through Providential grace."

Bharat passed the night on the bank of the Ganges. In the morning, he roused Satrughna from sleep and told him to get ready for the journey. At daybreak, Guha came and enquired about Bharat's welfare. Bharat after answering his questions asked to help him to cross the Ganges with his men.

At this, Guha came back quickly and roused his men in helping Bharat to cross the Ganges. Shortly,

his men fetched five hundred boats. Besides these, Guha brought a magnificent barge, called Swastika furnished with oars and pinions. Its inside was covered with a pale yellow coloured blanket worked with gold. And the Nishadas were playing music on its deck. Bharat then got upon the boat with Satrughna. First of all, priests and preceptors got upon it, then Kausalya and other queens boarded the boat. At the time of departure the troops set fire to their temporary sheds.

The boats then swiftly reached the other bank of the Ganges. Some ferried women, some horses, some bullocks, and some precious cars.

CHAPTER XXXVII

IN THE HERMITAGE OF BHARADWAJ.

In due time Bharat put off his arms and dress, and putting on a piece of silken cloth he went on foot with the counsellors, placing Vasistha in front of him. Coming near the hermitage he dismissed his counsellors and entered the asylum after Vasistha.

On seeing Vasistha, Bharadwaj rose from his seat and his pupils to fetch Arghya. Bharat then bowed to the saint. Seeing Bharat in company of Vasistha, Bharadwaj understood him to be king Dasarath's son. Having offered the guests water to wash their feet and fruits to eat, Bharadwaj enquired after the welfare of Ayodhya. He knew that Dasarath was dead so he did not ask anything about him. Then Vasistha and Bharat questioned Bharadwaj about the welfare of fire, pupils, trees, deer and birds.

After answering all these he asked Bharat about the cause of his visit and whether he intended any mischief to Ram.

Bharat hearing Bharadwaj's words replied in a voice choked with tears,

"I am undone if you too put such questions. No injury will be done to Ram by me. I am not least pleased with the action of my mother. I have come to bring back Ram by paying my homage to his feet.

Please banish all your doubts from your heart. Tell me where Ram stoppeth now."

Bharadwaj then joyfully returned, "This is quite worthy of you. Being born in the line of Raghu, control of senses, righteous instincts and serving the superiors are your duties. I knew your intention from before, but I asked you this just for the confirmation of your reputation. I know Ram. He is now living with Lakshman and Janaki in the Chitrakuta hills. You go there to-morrow, but spend the day in my hermitage."

Bharat then stayed there for Bharadwaj's hospitality and thanked him saying that he had already offered to him what could be procured in the forest. Bharadwaj then wanted to entertain Bharat's army and asked why he had left them behind? Bharat replied, "O Saint, it is in fear of you I could not bring my army along with me. Be he a king or a prince he should carefully avoid encroaching upon the hermitage of an ascetic. Horses, elephants, and men have come with me covering a large tract of ground. I have left them behind fearing that it might cause disturbance to the hermitage."

Bharadwaj then asked Bharat to order his army to come to his hermitage. Bharat did as directed.

Bharadwaj then entered the chamber of sacrificial fire and having rubbed his lips twice with water invoked God Vishwakarma for the entertainment of his guests..

"I invoke you Vishwakarma, expert in all works, for the entertainment of my guests. I also invoke the three rulers of the world, like Indra, for it. Let all the streams that flow towards the west in zig-zag course appear hither. Let some of them run with Maireya liquor, some with refined wines, some with cool waters sweet like sugarcane juice. I invoke all the gods and goddssses, Gandharvas, Ghritachi, Vishachi, Misrakeshi, Alambusha, Nagdatta, Hema, and Soma residing in the hillls. I also invoke the fairies that go to Indra and lotus-born Brahma to come with Tamvarus. And let the wonderful forest that exists in the north Kuru, whose leaves are ornaments and attires, and whose fruits are beautiful damsels, appear here. Let God Soma give me different kinds of food, meat, wines and other drinks and beautiful garlands."

Maharshi Bharadwaj by virtue of his penance and asceticism employed his voice in uttering the Mantras orthoepically in consonance with Siksha. He then ceased and prayed for the appearance of the deities, facing the west.

Then the gods thus invoked began to appear one by one. Sweet Zephyr began to blow by carrying perfumes from the Malaya and the Dardura Hills, and clouds began to rain flowers. Heavenly music was heard ; the Apsaras began to dance and the Gandharvas to sing. Sounds of Vina were being heard. Sweet music seemed to ascend the sky

and penetrate the earth. Troops of Bharat in astonishment surveyed the wonderful deeds of Vishwakarma. A square plot of level ground extending five leagues on all sides was covered with lustrous green grass, like blue sapphire, and on it stood Bels, Kapithwas, Jackfruit trees, Lemons, Amalakis, mangoes and other trees bent down with fruits. Pleasant Chaitraratha forest was transfigured from the north. There arose white edifices with four sections ; stables for horses and elephants ; mansions furnished with beds, and seats, various kinds of provisions, garlands, cleansed vessels and apparels. Bharat then entered one of those palaces with counsellors and priests.

At that time twenty thousand women sent by Prajapati, and another twenty thousand sent by Kuvera, adorned with pearls and gems appeared on the scene and created a havoc by their beauty. Then came another twenty thousand damsels from the heavenly Nandan forest. Gandharva king, Narada, Tamvaru and Gopa began to sing before Bharat. Misrakeshi and other heavenly damsels began to dance. Heavenly wreathes and flowers were seen in heaps at Prayaga. The Bel tree played upon Mridanga, Vibhitaka kept time and Aswatha tree began to dance !* Sinsapa, Amalki, Jamvu trees and

* An out and out miracle—quite difficult to understand. It may be a poetical hyperbole for a grand entertainment.

Mallika creepers appeared in the forms of women and they began to say, "Those who drink let them drink, those who are hungry, feed sumptuously on well dressed meat and sweets. Seven or eight women sometimes took a man on the bank of the river, helped him in bath, some shampooed his limbs and some offered him drink! Thus Bharat's hosts were entertained, each one enjoyed to his heart's content. No body had any dirty linen on him but each one was dressed in clean white clothes. Nobody looked sad or dirty but each one was bright and joyous, and every one gazed in wonder at gold and silver dishes decorated with flowers and filled with clean white rice. Those vessels contained fruit-juices, flavoury soups, curries and meat of goats and boars. Wells were filled with Payasha and the trees began to distill honey! Tanks were filled with wines and smoking venisons, meat of deer, cocks, pea-cocks were kept in heaps. Vessels for rice, curries, and hundred thousands golden washing bowls were kept there. Pitchers were filled with curds. Tanks were filled with butter milk and sugar. Bathing tubs contained scented astringent powders, scented grass, like Kalka, and other articles of bath were deposited there. Sticks for cleansing teeth, sandal paste, bright mirrors, sandals, combs, brushes, collyrium-pots, umbrellas, bows, mails, beds, seats, and drinking troughs for horses, elephants and asses were all kept in readiness. The whole

thing appeared like a wonderful dream, and every one was deeply astonished at this, and Bharat's troops passed their time like gods in the Nandana. The soldiers soon became intoxicated with wine, and garlands of flowers lay scattered trampled and crushed. Bharat was greatly pleased with the hermit's hospitality and being desirous of meeting Ram appeared before Bharadwaj. Bharadwaj asked whether he had a pleasant night and whether his troops were satisfied or not. Bharat said, that he and his people were more than satisfied and asked how far from there lay the hermitage of virtuous Ram?

Bharadwaj said, "About five miles from this place there is a hill called the Chitrakuta situated in a deep forest. Its woods and streams are quite pleasant. The river Bhagirathi flows by the north of this mountain. Your brother is living there by erecting a thatched hut. Proceed some distance along the southern bank of the Jamuna and then turn to your left and if you proceed along it you will find Ram."

Hearing this, Kausalya and Sumitra bowed to the saint's feet and Kaikeyi despised by all and overwhelmed with shame after bowing to the saint stood at some distance, with a sad mien near Bharat. Bharadwaj then wanted to know fully about his mothers. Bharat replied,

"Whom you find emaciated with fast and sorrows

is my father's queen—the mother of Ram; and she who stands with a dejected look like a branch of withered Karnika flowers is Sumitra. Heroic Lakshman and Satrughna are her sons. And for whom Ram and Lakshman have been banished into the forest and who is the cause of King Dasarath's death there stands dishonourable* Kaikeyi, though looks honourable in appearance, foolish, proud, irritable and cruel. This sinful woman is my mother. My misfortunes have been brought by her."

Thus saying Bharat began to heave deep sighs with red hot eyes like a panting serpent.

Then noble Bharadwaj said, "Don't blame your mother. This exile of Ram will surely produce good at the end to all."

Then Bharat after taking leave of Bharadwaj asked his men to get ready for their departure. At his orders the vast army was at once on its move and it proceeded along the western bank of the Ganges, by startling beasts and birds of the forest by fright. And the wild animals stampeded in fear in different directions. Thus they covered a great distance.

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* Arya—means honourable. Anarya—dishonourable. Thus how, in course of time, the distinction between the conquerors and the conquered came to be expressed.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE FOREST-LIFE.

Bharat then nearing the Chitrakuta said, "From what I have heard it seems that we have arrived at the place spoken by Bharadwaj. This is the Chitrakuta, and the Mandakini flows at its feet. There stretches deep forest, dense like clouds far and wide, and its peaks now being trampled by my huge elephants, trees standing over them are shedding their flowers like clouds pouring gentle rains. Look, Satrughna, these tracts belong to the Kinnaras; and deer, like autumnal clouds, are bounding in the air. The soldiers bearing shields have decked their heads with flowers like the southerners! Dusts raised by the hoops of the horses have darkened the sky, but for my benefit the wind is fast clearing them away. This terrible forest, devoid of human beings, to-day appears to me like populous Ayodhya! How beautiful are those bucks and does, they appear beautiful as if drawn in pictures! Let my army now retire and make search for Ram and Lakshman."

Bharat's men on entering the forest found a column of smoke rising from the woods. Thereupon they came to Bharat and said, "It is impossible to find fire where there is no human habitation so we assure you that

Ram and Lakshman now reside in this forest, or some ascetics like Ram." Bharat then asked them to observe silence and wait there. Bharat then proceeded towards the rising smoke taking Sumantra and Dhriti with him.

At that time, Ram who had been residing at the Chitrakuta for some time, said to Janaki to cheer her up, "Janaki ! at the sight of these beautiful hills I dont so much feel for the loss of kingdom nor so keenly for the separation from friends. How beautiful are the hills, the resort of wild birds all round the year, how high are its cliffs as if piercing the blue sky, how rich with minerals, for which the hills appear richly variegated in colours, some parts look silvery white, some purple, some look yellow like Manjistha, some blue like sapphire, some glittering like crystals, and some like Ketaki blossoms, and somewhere star-like lustre of mercury is seen. How tigers, bears and innocent deer roam about the forest. How it abounds in magnificent trees. Kinnara pairs live happily in these valleys. Close is the sporting-ground of the Vidyadharis. Excellent clothes and arms hang from the branches of the trees. Here is a waterfall, there is a rivulet, there is a fountain, and the mountain looks like an elephant emitting temporal sweat ! Sweet breeze delights all by wafting fragrance of flowers from the caves. Janaki ! If I live with you and Lakshman even for a long time in this forest sorrow will never

overtake me in any way. I feel great delight in this beautiful hill abounding in fruits and flowers and in tuneful birds. Don't you feel happy at these sights, pleasing to the body, mind and speech? My forefathers have assigned forest life as best suited for the attainment of salvation,—the only balm for all wordly sorrows and anxieties after death. Look how vast crags of various hues are scattered all round, some parts of the mountain appear like pretty gardens, and some like houses even! At night, the minerals* glow with their own energy (lustre) like flames of fire. These are the beds (haunts) of pleasure-seeking people, they have been made with coverlets of Sthagaras, Punnagas, Birch leaves and lotus petals. Look how they partook of fruits, how scattered lie the crushed garlands of lotuses! It seems that Chitrakuta has risen high by penetrating the earth. Its peaks are highly beautiful and they surpass in beauty Vamvaukasava, Kuvara's city, and the city of Indra and north Kuru. If I pass these fourteen years with you and Lakshman by following righteous path then I shall surely obtain happiness for observing the custom and duties of my race."

Then lotus-eyed Ram emerging from the Chitra-

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* Oshadhi—it means annual plants but here it is doubtful whether the word signifies them or it means medicinal herbs or gems and minerals.

kuta addressing Janaki of moon-like face said, "My darling, here flows the Mandikini. Its banks are most beautiful. Swans and cranes always croak on them, and various fruit bearing and flowery trees stand on them. Its descent is really beautiful. Look, how the thirsty deer drink its muddy water near the bank. Look the ascetics with matted locks and bathing in the river and anchorites with raised hands are worshipping the sun. The tops and branches of the trees crowned with fruits and flowers are swaying in the wind, it seems as if the hill itself is in dance! Look, how hosts of flowers being moved by the breeze are kissing the crystal stream of the Mandakini. The sight of the Chitrakuta and the Mandakini appears much more delightful than city-life. Virtuous saints daily bathe in this stream, so bathe with me as my companion and gather red and white lotuses from there. Just consider the hill to be Ayodhya and the Mandakini as the Saraju. Virtuous Lakshman is obedient to me and you are also favourably disposed towards me, so I feel myself immensely happy. Bathing thrice in this river and living on wild fruits and roots and drinking honey in your company, I do not even crave for the Kingdom of Ayodhya."

Saying this Ram began to walk with Janaki over the Chitraka, blue as the collyrium dye.

Thus Ram showed to Janaki wild woodland sceneries, and as they turned towards their cottage, Ram

found a beautiful cave in the slope of the mountain, in a shadowy recluse. Its floor was strewn with minerals and paved with stones. It was situate in a shadowy vale where the trees were bent down with blossoms and fruits and gay birds sang all the time.

Ram gazed with wonder and pointing the cave to Sita, said,

"O, Vaidehi! Do you like that beautiful place? Then let us rest here for a while. Look at that block of stone, so square, so smooth as if it was set for you! Look, how yonder flowery shrub, like a *kesar* tree, overshadows your head."

Then Janaki, in soft and tender accents, that betrayed her love, said,

"O flower of Raghu's line! My pleasure is to do thy will. It is enough for me to know your wish. You have indeed wandered long."

Thus saying in gentle tone, obedient Sita of spotless beauty and graceful limbs, went to the stone. But immediately Ram turned to his spouse and exclaimed,

"Look, Sita! This flowery vale seems to be the pleasure haunt of sylvan gods and goddesses. Look, how the pines, torn by the tusks of elephants distil their gums; how the whole forest has grown resonant with the sweet notes of cuckoo, Bhringaraj and other melodious singers of the wood. Look, how the creeper has twined delicate tendrils round the blossoming mango tree, so you throw your arms round me when there is none near by."

Thus saying Ram embraced his spouse, and loving Sita—beautiful as the Goddess of wealth and beauty—reclined on her husband's arms, and a mighty thrill of joy ran through his frame.

Ram in loving caress dubbed his finger in vermilion -like soft mineral dye of the rock and put a lovely circular mark on Sita's brow which seemed to gleam as the morning sun, whereupon Sita looked like the beautiful goddess of dawn.

Ram then overflowing with joy plucked some blossoms from the *kesara* tree and with them he decked the lovely tresses of Sita.

Thus after resting a while on the rocky ledge, Ram proceeded with Maitheli towards a pleasant shade where various kinds of creatures were straying about. Sita finding a monkey coming near her clung to Ram in fear, and her royal consort soothed her by lacing his mighty arm round her slender waist, and scared away the ape; and from that close embrace the red gleaming mark on Sita's brow was printed on Ram's expanded chest. And when the monkey fled away, Sita seeing that red mark stamped on Ram's chest gleefully burst forth in a ring of laughter. Then, seeing at distance a bunch of bright Asoka flowers shaking in the breeze, as if the tree was in flames. Sita fondly said, "O, pride of Raghu's line ! Let us bend our steps thither where the red Asoka blooms."

As divine Siva with his holy consort Uma roams

through the vast regions of the Himalayas, so Ram strayed about with Sita in that delightful forest, and the happy pair sported themselves to their hearts content and in their delightful sports each one put a crown of flowers upon the other's head.

Then, after strolling through the green woods, surveying the lovely spots there, they returned to their snug cottage where every thing was kept tidy and quite handy by Lakshman out of deep brotherly love. Lakshman hurried to meet them in the way, showed Ram the day's hunt—the ten black-deer killed by poisoned darts, and their well-dressed meat. Ram was greatly pleased at this and addressing Sita said,

"Look, my darling! This venison is fresh and sweet, to the taste, and it has been well roasted too, now supply us with your gifts."

Sita then cheerfully spread the woodland meal and honey before the brothers. After Ram and and Laksman finished their meals and washed their mouths, Janaki took her own repast.

Other venison was set apart for being dried, and Ram told Sita to scare away the crows from it. But Ram, to his great amusement, found Sita much distressed by a bold crow, that no sooner it was scared away it again greedily came near the meat. Sita chased the crow again and again, but all in vain, it rather threatened to stike her with its beak, wings and claws. Ram laughed finding Sita thus annoyed by the crow, and her cheeks were glowing with rage,

her lips quivering in anger, and frowns darkening her lovely brow.

Ram rebuked the bird for its impudence, but apparently it paid no heed to Ram's words, but flew again at Sita. At this, Ram fixed an arrow with Mantras to his bow and aimed at the crow. The bird sprang upon its wings, but the magic shaft followed wherever it flew. The crow then flew back to Ram and fell at his feet and pleaded for its life.

Ram hearing the bird entreating for its life said, "Finding Sita much distressed I took her side and set this arrow with mantras to take your life, but since ask for forgiveness and to spare your life. I shall grant thy prayer—I must protect the suppliant. But my shaft is never discharged in vain, so give up some part of your body in exchange of your life."

Thinking that it was better to live than to die, the crow yielded an eye and the arrow atonce struck the crow in the eye. Sita in deep amazement stared at this. The bird then flew away where it liked.

Thus being refreshed when Ram pointed to Sita the lovely rill running beneath the hill.

Mean while Bharat's army drew near.
Ram saw a cloud of dust raised by a marching army, and heard a defeaning uproar, and finding the wild animals running to and fro, he said, "Hark, Lakshman! A terrific noise like the rumbling of a thunder-cloud is being heard in the woods, and deer, elephants, buffaloes and lions are scampering

away in fear. Just ascertain its cause. Has any king or prince come hither for hunting? Or is it due to the ravages of some ferocious animal? Quickly ascertain the cause."

Thereupon, Lakshman soon climbed upon a flowery Sal tree and began to survey all round.

Lakshman, at last, saw a vast army marching towards the east, and addressing Ram said, "O worshipful Lord! Please put out the fire now and enter the cave with Janaki. Now put on your armour and get yourself ready by fixing string to your bow and have the arrows near at hand."

Ram said, "First try to ascertain to whom belongs this host."

Then Lakshman answered flaming with rage, "My Lord! Kaikeyi's son, Bharat, in order to remove all thorns from his side, has come to kill us. The Kovidara flag of the chariot is visible behind the yonder big tree. People are merrily marching towards us. Either let us take shelter in the mountain, or wait here with bows in our hands. To-day I shall see Bharat, the root cause of our sufferings and for whom you have lost your throne. He is our enemy and he deserves to be killed. It will not be sinful to kill him who first injures. I shall kill this Bharat and then you will rule over the earth. Greedy Kaikeyi will to-day find her son slain at my hands, like a tree riven by the elephant's tusk. To-day, I shall kill even Kaikeyi with Manthara. I shall

cast my anger on the army, as people set fire to woods.
I shall pay off the debt to my bow and arrows by killing Bharat to-day."

Ram finding Lakshman thus angry addressed him in pacifying words, "When mighty Bharat has himself come, what is the use of bows and arrows? I have vowed to observe my father's pledge, then what shall I gain by killing Bharat? What is kingdom to me? Whatever can be acquired by the destruction of friends, relations and of near and dear ones is like a poisoned food to me which I will never partake. And I swear to you, that religious merit, wealth, objects of desire and earthly possessions all that I may want is for you all, and I swear by my sword, that if I wish for the kingdom it is for the happiness and maintenance of my brothers. Lakshman! It is not difficult for me even to possess this sea-girdled earth, but I do not crave even for Indra's state by unrighteous means. What more? If I wish for any happiness depriving you all, may fire reduce that to ashes then and there. It seems, dear Bharat after returning from his maternal uncle's house to Ayodhya has been greatly mortified at the news of our exile, so he has come here to see us just out of deep love. Don't ascribe any other motive to his presence here. He does not wish us any harm even in his thoughts. Lakshman! why are you apprehensive about him? Never utter

any harsh expression against him? If you speak anything rude against Bharat it will in fact be against me. I know not how even in times of peril the son can slay his father, or a brother his brother, dear as one's own life? If you have said all these for kingdom then I shall ask Bharat in his presence to confer the kingdom on you. He will never disagree to my word, if I say this."

When virtuous Ram said this, Lakshman was overwhelmed with shame, and with diffidence said, "Perhaps father has come to see you."

Ram too finding Lakshman confounded with shame said,

"So it seems and he has come to take us back for he knows that we, who are accustomed to pass our days in ease and luxury, are now suffering from the hardships of forest-life. But why I do not see his white royal umbrella? It fills my heart with great misgivings. Now get down from the tree."

In the meantime in order to avoid all disturbance, Bharat asked his army to take their quarters at different places of the hill.

Then Bharat asked Satrughna to look for Ram and Lakshman with Guha and others, and he would walk on foot with priests and counsellors and that his mind would know no rest or peace tlll he found out Ram.

Bharat then walked through the flowery woods and then climbing up a Sal tree he found smoke

rising out of Ram's cottage. At the sight of smoke Bharat concluded that Ram must have been living there and was overwhelmed with delight at this thought. It seemed to him as if he had crossed a turbulent sea. He then proceeded with Guha towards the asylum of Ram. At the time of setting out, Bharat said to Vasistha to fetch his mothers without delay. Bharat then proceeded with Satrughna in hurried steps eager to meet Ram. Sumantra who too was pining for Ram followed Satrughna.

After proceeding some distance Bharat saw a cottage of leaves like the hermitage of a monk. He found fuels and flowers in front of the cottage, and heaps of dry dung of deer and buffaloes kept for the prevention of cold.

Bharat then cheerfully pointed out to Satrughna, "we have arrived at the place indicated Bharadwaj perhaps the Mandakini is close by. I find barks suspended from the trees, and it seems to me that they have been set up by Lakshman to mark the path as he has to leave the cottage sometimes at unusual hours. There rises dense smoke of fire which the anchorites carefully preserve in the forest. I shall soon get sight of saintly Ram devoted to his superiors."

Bharat then reaching the bank of the Madakini said, "Cursed is my life, worshipful Ram is passing his days in meditation and yoga. He has been

suffering all these for me. I won't be able to bear this odium. I shall throw myself at his feet and shall also entreat Janaki and Lakshman by holding their feet."

When Bharat was thus regretting he saw from distance the beautiful, sacred cottage of Ram, covered with the leaves of Sala, palms and Ashwakarna. He found there the formidable bow plated with gold, like the famous one of Indra, the accomplisher of mighty deeds and bringer of death to the enemies. As the Nether region looks resplendent with snakes, the quiver was full of sharp arrows flaming as the sun. There were swords in golden sheathes, shields and gloves* spangled with .gold. There stood a spacious altar and fire was burning to its north east. Bharat saw all these and at last found lotus-eyed and fire-like effulgent Ram seated on a skin, like God Sayambhu, with Sita and Lakshman in the cottage. He was clad in bark and a black deer-skin and wore matted locks on his head.

Bharat thus seeing the ruler of the earth broke forth in grief, "Alas who was attended by the courtiers is now surrounded by herds of wild deer! He is now clad in bare skin who used to wear costly apparels! Who was decorated with beautiful

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* Finger protector—the word is Angulitran in the original.

garlands is now wearing matted locks on his head! The body that was besmeared with precious sandal is now stained with dirt!

"He who used to perform great sacrifices with what great hardships is now observing religious rites! Alas! He is suffering all these for me. Shame upon my hateful self."

Saying this Bharat approached Ram with a perspiring body, and before he came to close quarters he fell down on the ground being blinded with tears. As he fell down he exclaimed,

"O Arya!" But his voice was choked. He silently stared at Ram. He again attempted to speak but couldnot As he uttered "Arya" his voice was again choked.

Then Satrughna with tearful eyes adored the feet of Ram. Ram embraced him and began to shed tears. As the sun and the moon meet Sukra'(Venus, and Vrihaspati (Jupiter) in the sky, so Ram and Lakshman met Sumantra and Guha. The denizens of forest began to shed tears at the sight of these four princes.

CHAPTER XXXIX

MEETING WITH RAM.

Here Bharat was lying prostrate on the ground with folded palms. His face was dark with sorrow, his locks were matted, and he was clad in bark and was incapable of being gazed upon like the Doomsday sun. When Ram recognised the great hero he embraced him and took him on his lap. Ram then questioned him with great care.

"My boy! Where is father now? You shouldn't have come here while he is alive. I meet you after a long time since your stay in your maternal uncle's house. Now, tell me why have you come to this deep jungle? Is father alive, or has he gone to the other world being afflicted with sorrow for my separation? You are still a boy, has the kingdom been wrested from your hands? Dost thou not minister to the wishes of our father? Is our righteous father—the performer of Rajasuya and the Ashwamedha sacrifices—in good health? Does our family priest Vasistha receive due honours?"

"Are Queen Kausalya and Sumitra doing well? Is not worshipful Kaikeyi passing her days in happiness? Does not noble Sujajna conversant with rituals perform your ceremonies? Do not intelligent

people look after the sacrificial fire? Do they not inform you in due time about the sacrifice? Don't you show proper respect to the deities, father, father-like preceptors, the old, the physicians and to your employees? Do you slight preceptor Sudhanva who is versed in polity and in the use of weapons employed both with Mantras and without? Have you engaged high-born, valiant, wise, and self-controlled persons as your counsellors who can like you read the import of signs? If counsel is well kept by wise counsellors then success attends in every thing. I hope you are not subject to sleep, and you rise in proper hour, and decide about the means of attaining your objects towards the end of night. I think you consult yourself and others in your actions and keep your decisions always secret, and always quickly perform things that can be easily done and which are conducive to public weal. The frontier chiefs no doubt know what you have accomplished or what is about to be completed, but they do not know what remains to bo done. They can not even guess or infer by reasoning what you and your counsellors wish to keep secret. Doest thou not wish for a single wise man instead of thousands of fools? In times of financial difficulties, wise people help us in every way, but if the king be surrounded by hundreds or thousands of fools he can't depend upon a single person. In short, even a single capable minister may secure immense prosperity to the king. My boy,

Don't you appoint best men to the highest offices, mediocres in middling situations, and low class people for low work ?"

"Dont you entrust most responsible works to ministers who are men of character, above bribery and have been holding the office through hereditary succession (from father to son). Do people even when severely punished show any disrespect towards you ? Do the priests scorn you, as women hate lustful people who uses force against them ? He who does not put an end to an unfaithful servant clever in polity, or a valiant warrior covetous of riches, is himself ruined in turn. Do you not follow this policy ? Don't you appoint an intelligent, high born and a devoted warrior as your general ? Don't you honour those men of rank who are well versed in militarism and have given proofs of their prowess before the public ? Don't you pay your army regularly and provide them with their rations in due time ? Do you make any delay in this ? If salaries and rations are not given in proper time, the employees get annoyed with their master, and then all sorts of troubles* follow. Are the chiefs of the clans devoted to you ? Are they prepared even to die for you ? Do you employ educated citizens, possessed with presence of mind and boldness of speech, as your

* A sound piece of military administration. Hunger, they say, is the mother of socialism.

emissaries? Have you gathered informations through spies about eighteen* expedients of others and fifteen of your own? Do you slight the enemy who comes again though driven off before?

I think you donot concern yourself with athiestic Brahmans. All those peurile persons proud of their learning can only bring evil to others, and inspite of the existence of excellent religious literature they vainly engage themselves in barren sophistical arguments. Are you not defending Ayodhya—the land of our arecestors provided with strong City-gates, and full of beautiful palaces, inhabited by the noble and energetic Aryan people, and where there is plenty of elephants, horses, tanks, temples, chaityas, jewels, and corns, whose border lands are well cultivated, and where there is good society, where men and women are happy and gay, and where festivities are always held, where there is no room for malice or

* The following are the persons alluded to here:—(1) Minister, (2) Priest, (3) Heir-apparent, (4) General, (5) Warders, (6) Gatekeepers of the inner apartment, (7) Superintendent of Jail, (8) Treasurer, (9) Conveyors of Royal commands, (10) Interogators of law called Pradvivaka i.e. pleaders, (11) Judges, (12) Jury—deciders of customs etc. (13) Pay-master of salaries, (14) Distributor of pensions after service, (15) City-Administrators, (16) Rangers of forests, (16) Magistrate, (17) Justice of the peace and (18) Chieftains of forts. Fifteen excepting the first three, includes the rest. Mr. Griffrith has omitted this Chapter altogether.

wickedness, and where there is no ferocious animal, where cultivation is carried with waters of the river. Is not that wealthy province free from all disturbing elements? Do not cultivators and breeders enjoy your favour? Do not the people follow their vocations and live in happiness? Do you not maintain them by preventing their evils and doing good to them? It is your duty to protect all who are living under your jurisdiction. My boy! Are the women folk safe through your care? Don't you honour them? Do you confide any secret to them? What interest do you take in the collection of animals? There are many forests in the kingdom full of elephants. Don't you look after them? Don't you rear mares and female-elephants? Don't you enter the court in royal robes? Don't you travel along the streets even rising early in the morning? Do the servants approach you fearlessly or they keep them away? You see a middle course between too much familiarity and inaccessibility is good. Are the forts well provided with wealth, corns, water, arms, machines, artizans and soldiers? Is not your income greater than your expenditure? Do you give anything to the undeserving? Are you not open handed in the worship of deities, in the performanee of rites to the deceased ancestors, in the services of guests, Brahmans, warriors, and friends? Do you punish from covetousness a good man accused of a crime without having him first-tried and without

finding him guilty by a competent judge versed in the Shastras? Do you set free from motives of gain a thief arrested with stolen property and confronted with interrogatories? Do not your counsellors impartially judge between parties whether rich or poor when they are involved in disputes? When false cases are not justly tried i. e., when there is a failure of justice, the tears of the innocent bring about the ruin of the princes. Haven't you won over children, the aged, the physicians and important persons by liberal gifts? Do you oppose righteousness for gain or for the gratification of your senses? Have you eschewed atheism, untruthfulness, inattention, anger, procrastination, evil company, idleness, gratification of the senses, consultation with one person about the kingdom, consultation with wicked persons, divulgenee of plans non-performance of an action already decided upon, non-commencenent of work in the morning and setting out all enemies at one and the same time—all these fourteen evils? Have you understood the value and consequences of the Ten vargas (things),* five

The atrention of the reader is invited here, this will give him an idea of the administration of that time, also of its material prosperity.

* Ten vargas :—(1) Hunting, (2) Gambling, (3) Sleeping in the day, (4) Villifying, (5) Addiction to women, (6) to wine, (7) to dancing, (8) to singing, (9) to playing upon musical instruments, (10) And purposeless rambling.

vargas*, four vargas†, seven vargas‡, eight vargas§ and three vargas.‖ Have you mastered the three¶ and learnt the art of polity? Have you attained victory over the senses and over evils both superhuman and committed by men?

Have you attained six virtues (a)? Do you perform what is to be done by a king (b)? Do you pay

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* Five kinds of fortresses: Jala Durga (water fort), Giri Durga (hill fortress), Venu Durga (forest fort), Harin Durga (fortress full of corns and deer (cattle?) and Dhanwan Durga (fortress inaccessible in summer).

† Four kinds of administrative policy by which to govern the kingdom:—(1) Equity, (2) Liberality (3) Difference (Divide and rule) and (4) Punishment.

‡ Seven indispensible factors of administration:—(1) Sovereign, (2) Ministers, (3) Polity, (4) Fortress, (5) Treasury, (6) power, (7) Friends.

§ Agriculture, commerce, fortress, bridges, capture of elephants, mines, oars, revenue. Some say eight kinds of manifestations of anger as, frowning, etc.

‖ Interest (2) Desire and (3) Virtue.

¶ The Vedas. At first the Atharva Veda was not included in the division of the Vedas.

(a) Peace, (2) War, (3) Marching and halting, (4) Sowing, (5) Dissensions (6) and seeking protection.

(b) As to rescue the frightened from the cause of fear, to protect the honourable from insult, etc.

attention to (c) twenty Vargas, to (d) Prikritis, to (e) Mandala, (f) Jatra, (g) Punishment and (h) the two yonis—Peace and war ?"

"Don't you perform the rites enjoined by the Vedas ? Don't you find them to fructify ? Are all the wives barren ? I hope your learning has not been in vain. Do you act in the manner I have just now spoken to you ? These are conducive to longevity, fame, wealth and virtue. You are no doubt following the examples of our forefathers. I presume you do not alone enjoy all the dainties yourself, but

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(cj Twenty classes of people with whom friendship or peace should not be contracted, viz,. :—Children ; invalids ; old people ; one who was been excommunicated by his kinsmen ; cowards ; ferocious persons ; the greedy ; the irritable ; a man with too many advisers ; one with too many foes ; the unrighteous ; too much worldly persons ; one smitten by Providence ; slanderer of gods and Brahmans ; almost a dead person, etc.

(d) Prikritis were five in number :—Ministers, (2) Treasure, (3) Territory, (4) Fortress, (5) Chastisement.

(e) Twelve classes of chiefs capable of declaring war, concluding peace and of observing neutrality.

(f) Fivefold marching (Manœuvres) of the army at the time of battle.

(g) Administration of criminal justice.

(h) Yonis—sources—here the expression means peace and war.

distribute them among friends who wish for them. Now mark, my darling! the king, the chastiser of people, can enjoy the earth, yet can also attain heaven after death by justly governing the people."

After giving such advices in the forms of questions to Bharat, Ram asked, "Now tell me why you have come to the forest leaving the kingdom wearing matted locks and deer skin? Tell me everything unreservedly, I am anxious to hear them."

CHAPTER XL

BHARAT'S REPLY

Bharat somehow subduing his grief said with joined hands :

"O Arya ! Father after performing a terrible thing at the instigation of Kaikeyi has died of grief for his son. To speak the truth, this sinful act has been committed by mother, and instead of getting the kingdom she has obtained widowhood, and has been condemned to eternal perdition. O worshipful one ! I am your servant, be pleased with me and enjoy your kingdom like Indra—the King of Gods. People and widowed mothers have come to you, please do them favour. You are the eldest and you are to be invested with the crown, so according to custom and morality you should take back your kingdom and thus fulfil the desire of your friends and kinsmen. Let earth cease to be a widow by getting back you as her lord. With my counsellors I entreat you by your feet. I am your brother, pupil and servant, be pleased with me. These ministers hold their offices from generation to generation according to the law of heredity ; they had never been slighted so it behoves you not to override their wishes."

Saying this Bharat fell at Ram's feet with tearful eyes.

Then Ram embracing Bharat said, "How can a man, true to his vows and born of a noble line, do a sinful act just for a kingdom ? You are not be blamed for my exile, and do not also blame your mother through ignorance. Superiors can act as they like in relation to their sons and .wives ; sons and disciples should always be obedient. The king has enough authority either to send me to exile or to confer the kingdom on me. Mother is as worshipful as the father and when they have sent me to the forest how can I act otherwise ? Go back to Ayodhya and rule the kingdom and I shall live here in the Dandaka forest. This is the wish of the King, now it is your duty to obey that ; you should go back and enjoy what has been assigned to you. What has been ordained by that Indra-like noble lord is certainly for my good, the kingdom does not appear covetable to me."

Bharat replied, "O noble one ! I have already violated morality and custom, then what do I care for the duties of a king ? It is an immemorial custom in our family that the younger should not ascend the throne in presence of the elder. So come back with me to Ayodhya and ascend the throne for the benefit of our race. The King whose acts are righteous though people may regard him as a human being but to me he is a god. When I was in Kekaya and you were in the forest, father shuffled off his mortal coil. As soon as you set

out with Janaki and Lakshman from Ayodhya father died of intense grief. Now please get up and perform his last rites, I have already performed them. You were the most favourite of father, may the things offered by you reach the eternal region of Pitriloka. Alas! The King greatly pined for your sight and he died of grief for your separation." Hearing these shocking words—terrible as thunderbolt—Ram fell prostrate stretching his arms on the ground, like a flowery tree felled down by an axe.

Then his brothers and Janaki finding Ram lying like an elephant fatigued with the sport of upturning the earth with its tusks began to sprinkle water with tearful eyes to restore his consciousness.*

Slowly Ram regained his consciousness. He then began to shed tears and mournfully said to Bharat:

"Father has gone to the heaven, what shall I do by returning to Ayodhya? Who will govern the city widowed by the death of the King? I am indeed born unfortunate, I could not be of any service to my father. I could not perform his funeral rites who gave up his life for me. Bharat! You and Satrughna are fortunate, you have performed the last rites of our father. Even after the expiry of the period of

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* The preceding speech of Ram seems to be an interpolation for as soon as Ram heard of his death, he fainted in grief and Sita too began to shed bitter tears. This chapter has been omitted by Mr. Griffith.—Translator.

exile I shall not return to lordless Ayodhya. Father is dead, who will now advise me as to what is right and what is wrong? From whom I shall now hear those sweet words of encouragement which I used to hear when succeeded in performing a thing successfully?"

Ram then approached fullmoon-like Sita with tearful eyes and addressing her said with a grief-stricken heart, "O Sita! Your father-in-law is dead. O, Lakshman! You have become fatherless. Brother Bharat has brought this cruel news."

On hearing of father-in-law's death Sita's eyes grew dim with tears, and for that she could not see her beloved Ram. Ram after consoling Sita said to Lakshman,

"My boy! Bring me Ingudi fruits and a new bark. I shall now go to the Mandikini and perform the watery rites of my father. Let Sita proceed first, you go after her, and I shall follow you. At the time of mourning this is how one should proceed according to the Shastras."*

Then ever-serviceable Sumantra took Ram by the hand to the bank of the Mandakini consoling him all the way. Bharat and others also arrived there. Ram then facing the south and taking water in the cavity of his joined palms said with tearful eyes,

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* The order of procession was the youngest went first and the eldest last; and first children, then women and then men.

"Father! You have now repaired to heaven, may this clear water offered by me produce your satisfaction there."

Then Ram with his brothers came to the margin of the Mandakini and placing the Pindas of Ingudi mixed up with Jujube fruits on a bed of grass, said with tears, "Father, accept this Pinda and partake of it. We are now residing in the forest and we live upon such food, and what one partakes he can offer it to the manes of his ancestors."

Ram then left the bank of the river and following the same route by which he previously came he ascended the hill, and arriving at the door of his cottage he took Bharat and Lakshman by the two hands. At that time their grief for their father seemed to be renewed and they began to cry aloud resounding the hill with their cries like the muffled roars of a lion. At this Bharat's party grew alert and thought that probably Bharat had met Ram and they were now crying for their dead father. Then they ran towards the direction of the sound and the whole forest shook with their hurried steps.

On arriving at the cottage, the followers of Bharat found sinless Ram seated on the ground. At that sight their eyes were filled with tears and started abusing Kaikeyi and Manthara. Ram stood up at their sight and embraced them affectionately and they bowed to his feet. They then burst into loud lamentations, and everyone considered Ram so

recently exiled as his dear one forever residing in a foreign land !

In the mean time Vasistha was coming along with the queens. The queens were slowly proceeding on foot along the bank of the river, and on seeing a bank's descent (ghat) built for the use of Ram and Lakshman, to get into the Mandakini stream, Kausalya broke forth in tearful eyes pointing the same to Sumitra and other co-wives, "Look, Sumitra ! this is the bank's descent of those unfortunate who have been deprived of their kingdom. Your son Lakshman, unknown to laziness, personally carries water for Ram along these flights. It is a menial work, but it does not degrade since he does it for his elder, yet this toilsome work is unworthy of him."

Seeing the Ingudi Pindas on grass, Kausalya said, "Look ! Ram has offered here Pindas to the noble lord of the Ikshwaku line. What a poor offering to the lord of the earth who used to enjoy all the dainties of the world ? How will he feed upon Ingudi fruits ? Nothing can be more painful than this. But I wonder why my heart was not rent into two at this painful sight ?"

Other queens with great difficulty consoled Kausalya, but when they saw Ram in the forest like an angel dropped from the heaven, they broke forth in loud sobs.

Ram immediately stood up at their sight and

bowed to their feet. They then with their soft palms began to brush off the dusts from his back. Lakshman then greeted them with a sorrowful heart. They treated Lakshman as they had done with Ram. At last, Janaki, grown lean with the hardships of forest-life, touched the feet of her mothers-in-law, stood silent with tearful eyes. At that sight Kausalya burst into tears and embracing her as her own daughter exclaimed in grief :

"Alas ! How is she, who is the daughter of the king of Vedaha, daughter-in-law of king Dasarath, and wife of Ram, bearing these hardships in the forest ? My daughter ! The sight of your face which now looks like a withered lily, like a crushed lotus, like gold covered with dusts, and like the moon hidden in the clouds, scolds my heart as fire burns a log of wood."

Then Rama bowed to fire-like-effulgent Vasistha, as Indra does to Vrihaspati, and sat down after the latter took his seat. After this Bharat, his ministers, captains and priests sat behind them with folded palms. Every one burnt with curiosity to hear what would Vasistha speak to Ram.

The night, however, passed in their lamentations for their father, and when the day dawned they went to the Mandikini, and performed their morning services there—(Homa and recitation of the Sabitri Mantras) and after that they silently came back to Ram.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE PERSUASIONS.

Bharat then addressing Ram, said before all,

"My Lord ! The kingdom by bestowing which on me, father wanted to pacify my mother I do now make over to your hands. Enjoy the kingdom free from all thorns. Who excepting you can now protect the kingdom torn asunder like a dam breached by strong currents of water during the rains ? As the mule can not imitate a horse, or a common fowl the king of birds so you should know me (to be the same) in comparison of you. Happy is the man upon whom depend others for their sustenance, but unhappy is he who depends on others for his own support. Let all people witness you duly established on the throne." Every one praised Bharat for his noble words.

Then gentle Ram replied, "My boy ! A created being does not enjoy any independent existence, he has no freedom of will, he can't act as he likes,he is subject to death. Everything is perishable, every rise has its fall, where there is composition there is decomposition, there is life as well as death.* As a ripe fruit has no other course† but to fall, as an edifice standing

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* In the original Death draws him both here and after.

† When literally translated it stands thus as a ripe fruit has no other fear than fall, so a man who is born has no other fear than death.

on massive pillars grows weak when dilapidated with age, so a man grows feeble and the night that hath passed away wont return back, as the stream of the Jamuna flowing towards the ocean does not recede in its course. As summer's heat continually dries up the water of a tank so ever-fleeting days and nights rob people of their longevity. Whether you be stationary in one place or roam about hither and thither, your life must run to its end. So think about yourself and don't bother about others. Death accompanies you in your walk, sits down when you sit, he travels long distance with you, and returns with thee. With age a man grows weak, his skin is wrinkled and his hair turns grey. Now tell me how can you prevent these ? Man rejoices at the rise of the sun and he feels delighted at the approach of night, but he does not understand that his life by this time has been shortened. People are delighted at the advent of a new season, but they donot understand that with the revolution of seasons their longevity has been shortened. As in the vast ocean one piece of wood comes in contact with another (by the force of the current, i. e., by mere accident) but in time becomes separated so you should understand a man's association with wealth, wife and children. It is impossible to get rid of this eternal chain of birth and death. He who laments for another's death cannot, however, prevent his own."

"As a traveller follows another seeing him going ahead of him so we shall have to follow our predecessors. Why should then a man mourn for another when he cannot alter his own inevitable end? Seeing life ebbing fast like the flow of a stream which cannot be called back, man should engage himself in search of happiness, since happiness is the end of all. Our virtuous father after performing many meritorious sacrifices has repaired to heaven. It is not proper to mourn for him. He has attained heavenly bliss by casting off his infirm body, so we must no more weep for him. In all circumstances, intelligent people subdue grief, lamentations and tears, so be not overwhelmed with grief, go back to Ayodhya and reside in the capital. This was the wish of our father and let me pursue my own duties here. He was our father and it is not proper to disobey his commands. You ought to honour him. It is our duty to obey our superiors who wish for our ultimate good. Father has attained heaven by his own merits, you may rest assured. Now attend to your own duties."

Thus saying Ram lapsed into silence.

Then Bharat returned,—"My noble lord, who is like you in this world? Sorrow can not afflict you, nor pleasure can buoy you up. You are an ideal to the aged people, though you consult them in times of doubt. To you, life and death, good and evil are all equal. You have nothing to grieve for. In

fact one who has acquired self-knowledge like you is not moved by any calamity or sorrow. You are truthful, wise and divine in nature, the mysteries of life and death are not unknown to you, so even intense sorrow cannot overpower you."

"What my mean-minded mother has done in my absence in a distant land had not the least approval of mine, so be with me. It is for religious consideration that I have not as yet taken the life of this sinful woman. How would I commit such a nefarious act being born of illustrious Dasarath ? King Dasarath was our father, king and preceptor so I should not speak anything ill of him, but was this right (being congnizant of what is right and what is wrong) to act in this manner at the instigation of his wife ? It is said that 'when one's end is near, his sense becomes perverted.' From the conduct of the King this adage seems to be true. However, now rectify the wrong that has been committed either through anger, ignorance or wrecklessness. The son is called "Apatya" because he saves his father from fall, so be thou a true son."

"It is not becoming of you to perpetuate the wrong done by father. What he has done is most unjust and highly reprehensible. So be gracious to comply with my request. How ill-matched is Kshatriya valour with forest-life, and matted locks with sovereignty ? How monstrous ! It is not at all becoming of you to pursue such a perverse line of action. Governing the

people is the duty of a Kshatriya, but which Kshatriya by putting aside this Kshatriya morality will adopt a dubious and an arduous course resorted to by old people? But if you are inclined to arduous duties, then adopt the onerous duty of governing the four orders of people according to custom and morality. Virtuous people say that of the four orders* the life of a householder is the best, then why do you intend to abandon that? My lord! In attainments and in age I am a boy to you. Who can govern in your presence? I even lack in common sense. I can not live without your help, so you rule over the earth. Vasistha and other Ritwigas versed in Mantras with the subjects will present you the crown even here. After the coronation ceremony, go back to Ayodhya like Indra, the ruler of heaven. Absolve yourself from the threefold debts, viz., to the gods, to the ancestors and to the Rishis; heighten the miseries of your enemies and increase the pleasure of your friends, and rule over me. Rescue our revered father Dasarath from sin by removing the

* Four orders of life according to the old Hindus were :—Brahmacharya (celibacy), Garhasthya (householder), Vanaprastha (retiring to the forest by eschewing wordly life), (Bhikshu mendicancy). Manu says, the life of a householder is the best for he can attain the merits of other orders by discharging faithfully the household duties as all creatures depend on air, so all other orders are subordinate to Garhasthya order.

disgrace of my mother Kaikeyi. I throw myself at thy feet and entreat you again and again and do me this favour. If you retire to another forest without granting my prayers, I tell you that I shall go along with you."

Bharat bowed down and thus entreated, but Ram did not acquiesce in his words; he was determined to carry out the mandate of his father. So he was both pleased and pained by Bharat's entreaties. Then all praised Bharat for his noble speech, and they all entreated Ram again and again.

Ram then returned, "Bharat! You are born of King Dasarath, and what you have proposed is worthy of you. But father at the time of marrying your mother promised to the king of Kekaya that he would bestow the kingdom upon the son born of that marriage. Then he promised your mother two boons being pleased with her nursing at the time of the war between the Gods and the Asuras; therefore your mother asked for the two boons, my exile and your installation to the throne. I have come to the forest with Janaki and Lakshman to redeem father from his pledge, so you should also without further delay accept the kingdom for observance of truth. Even for my satisfaction you should redeem father from his obligation and should greet your mother. Hear me, my boy! In Gaya high-souled Gaya at the time of sacrifice to please his departed ancestors, recited this vedic hymn.:

'He who saves his father from the hell named Put is called Putra, and he who saves* his father from all sorts of difficulties is also a Putra (or a true son). The wise people pray for many sons because at least one of them may go to Gaya (to offer pindas).' Bharat! Such was the belief of the former kings. So go back to Ayodhya and get yourself installed and rule over the people for their welfare with the help of Satrughna and the Brahmans. I shall shortly repair with Janaki to the Dandaka forest. You rule over men, let me rule over the animals here. Go back with a contented mind and I shall too set forth to the Dandaka with delight. Let white umbrella shade your head. I shall take refuge under the cooler shadow of these forest trees. As Lakshman to me Satrughna will be of great help to you. Thus let us fulfil the vow of our father."

Then sage Javali observed, "Ram! You are intelligent and wise but let not your intelligence lead you to discomfitures like that of an ordinary person. Now mark, who is whose friend? Who is entitled to a thing by virtue of his relation? Man is born alone and dies alone. He is an insane person who becomes affectionatly attached to another, as his father or mother. As at the time of setting out for a foreign land a man resides outside his village, and on the next morning he leaves it (without remorse)

* The Sanskrit verb 'trayati' means to save; Put (hell) and root tra.

you should know such is a man's relation with his father, mother, house and wealth. Good people never become attached to these. Therefore, it is not becoming of you to renounce the ancestral kingdom at the request of your father, and to live in this dense forest full of perils. Go back to prosperous Ayodhya, and the city is waiting for you like a woman wearing a single braid of hair.* You will pass your days happily like Indra the ruler of Gods. Dasarath was nobody to you, so you were none to him, he was other than your father. You are also other than his son, so you act as I tell you to do. Father is regarded as a mere instrumental cause of birth, in fact, the germinal seed which mother holds in her womb during her course is the true cause of generation. Now, King Dasarath has gone to a place where every man is bound to go at last—it is his nature—but you are spoiling everything by your foolishness (perverse intellect). I am really anxious for those who, disregarding all tangible duties and

*. The custom was that a woman separated from her husband or lover discarded all her toilets and used to wait for the union with her uncombed hair woven into a single braid. Cf. Uttaram Ramcharit's classical description of Sita, with pale cheeks and a single braid of hair, like the image of sorrow or pity herself personified. Here is a crowning piece of sophistry to induce Ram to shake off his moral scruples. This shows that gross materialistic ways of thinking were not unknown to the ancient Hindus.

works that lie within the province of perception, busy themselves with (unsubstantial) virtue alone; they after suffering various miseries here on earth are, at last, annihilated by death. You find people to perform Astaka Sradh in honour of their dead ancestors, but this means only sheer waste of rice, for who has ever heard that a dead man can eat? If food taken by one could nourish another's body, then feed one on behalf of a person living in a distant country. But does this serve the man living in a distant land as his food—does he feel gratified by it? Certainly not. The injunctions about worship of gods, sacrifice, gifts and penance have been laid down in the Shastras by clever people, just to rule over people and to make them submissive and disposed to charity. Therefore, O Ram! content yourself with this idea that there is no after-world, nor any religious practice for attaining that. Follow what is within your experience and do not trouble yourself with what lies beyond the province of human experience. Bharat is entreating you, take common-sense view of the thing approved by all, and accept the monarchy."

But this speech of Javali failed to produce any change in Ram's mind, and he, observing rules of piety, returned: "O, Sage! What you have just now said for my interest though appears like a desirable course of action is indeed not so (it looks like duty, but it is not). He who is vicious and walks

along a wrong path, and preaches against the doctrines of the Shastras, is not honoured by good people. One's conduct shows whether one is high born or low born, whether he is valiant or vain, pure or impure. If I act according to your advice, various mischiefs will ensue. Your view is most unliberal. Acting according to your precept, a mean-charactered fellow may appear as honourable, the vicious may appear as pure, and the inauspicious may look like auspicious. I shall be condemned by the virtuous and shall be guilty of violating the family custom if I adopt this reprehensible course of action as my duty. I can not then hope to attain the blissful state (after death) for the fulfilment of a vow, and the subjects following my example will go astray. So what you have said does not appear to be commendable to me."

"The immemorial royal polity, where kindness plays a prominent part, is based upon truth. Wonderful is the potentiality of truth, all the world is being held by it. Gods and saints honour truth greatly ; truthful people attain Brahmaloka ; love of truth is at the root of all religions. Truth is God, and religion is based upon it. nay everything rests on truth. There is nothing greater than truth. The Vedas, enjoining Sacrifice, Charity, Homa and penance are founded upon truth. The earth (wealth), reputation and fame crave for him who is truthful. So from all considerations it is desirable to be truthful.

I shall renounce that so-called religion, or Kshatriya morality, that is followed by the low, mean-minded, cruel and greedy people. One may commit three kinds of sins either by his body, or by his mind, or by his speech. One man maintains his family., another goes to hell, and another is honoured by the gods in heaven. My father was devoted to truth. Why should I disobey that which he laid upon me, being bound by truth. To him I am bound by truth and I shall not breach the bridge of truth through ignorance, coveteousness, anger or pride. I have heard that Gods and ancestors donot accept any offerings of an untruthful man. This devotion of truth is the highest of all spiritual faiths ; noble men have always borne its burden, therefore, I have become anxious to follow it. Now, what you have explained to me with your reasons appears to be quite hateful to me. How can I agree to Bharat's proposal after accepting my decree of exile by vowing before my father ? Kaikeyi was greatly pleased when I bound myself by truth, how can I now displease her ? I shall henceforth pass my days by leading a chaste and pure life by subsisting on fruits and roots, to the satisfaction of the Gods and ancestors. Having come to this field of action one should do what is good, but not what is only desirable. Agni, Vayu and Soma have attained their lofty positions by their own meritorious acts. Indra, the king of Gods, have obtained his heavenly kingdom by the performance

of hundred sacrifices, this is why he is called Satakratu."

"O sage! Truth, religion, penance, charity, sweet speech, worship of gods, hospitality towards the guests are the ways that lead to heaven; the Brahmans have assigned them to be means of salvation. Your words are quite antagonistic to the Vedas and religion, and father was to be blamed for appointing you as a priest. As a Buddhist * is

* It is clear, it is an interpolation. The original Ramayan was certainly compiled long before the rise of Buddha. The great religion of love and wisdom preached by Buddha, which so strongly pleaded for humanity and morality, as a logical sequence, discarded all cruel rites and meaningless rituals and by strongly insisting upon equality and fraternity gave a tremendous shock to the hereditary caste system and many other old customs and superstitions of the Hindus. Buddhism in its mighty sweep carried away good many things so long fondly held sacred by the people and broke down the formidable hegemony of the Brahmans. Hence this religion came to be regarded as antagonistic to Hinduism, though Buddha is regarded as an Avatar of Vishnu! But in course of time, Buddhism itself became infested with dark superstitions and horrid rites, while its followers degraded the rational agnosticism and 'the law of moral fixity' of Buddha into an atheistical cant, for the exact words of Buddha were long lost and they were substituted by those of his disciples which greatly perverted the views of their great master. It is said that Buddha maintained silence

punishable like a thief, so an atheist deserves to be punished, and an atheist is to be shunned as condemned by the Vedas, and wise people should not talk with him. Better Brahmins than you practise this religion and perform sacrifices, penance and other rites. In fact those who are religious, generous, and affectionate are honoured in this world."

When Ram said this with some temper, Javali humbly replied, "Ram ! I am neither an atheist, nor am I an advocate of atheism, and it is not true that there is no after-world after death. I become a believer or an atheist as occasions demand. Time has come when one should grow an atheist, and I have

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when interrogated in his death-bed about the final End and cause of the Universe—Moreover, the pessimistic philosophy of Buddhism depicting the world as an abode of eternal miseries (though largely taken from the Sankhya system) encountered a formidable rival in the bold optimism of the Vedanta, which denies life to be a long-drawn sigh of agony and asserts salvation to be a more positive bliss than mere extinction of all sorrows. Then all sorts of corruptions crept into that system, and no wonder that a Buddhist or Bauddha in later phraseology came to designate an atheist and an immoral person. When the final recension of the Ramayan came to be fixed, it had to face the problem that confronted the Hindu Society at that time, on account of the Buddhistic corruptions, and as usual, the reaction against Buddhism came through literature first.—Translator.

said all these just to induce you to leave the forest, but now I withdraw my words for your satisfaction."

Then saintly Vasistha seeing Ram somewhat irritated said, "My boy, Javali is quite conversant with the final departure of human beings to the other world and their re-birth. He has said these just to pursuade you to return to Ayodhya. Ram, you are the descendant of King Dasarath ; it is your duty to ascend the throne and rule over the kingdom. It is the custom amongst the Ikshwakus that the eldest should ascend the throne and it is not proper for you to violate that time-honoured custom. So you rule the earth like you father Dasarath."

"My boy ! Three persons are adorable on earth—father, mother and the preceptor. Ram ! I am your preceptor as well as of your father, and you will attain spiritual merits by obeying my words, and also by the act of protecting your friends, relations, people and the princes under you. It does not behove thee to disregard the words of your aged mother—pious Kausalya, nor to slight the repeated requests of virtuous Bharat for your return."

Ram, hearing these words of Vasistha, replied, "O Sage ! Father and mother do their utmost to feed their children, to keep them healthy and clean ; they encourage them to play and always use sweet speeches towards them. Their debts can never be repaid. So I can not disobey the words of my procreator, father."

Then Bharat looked greatly depressed and said, "Sumantra ! Spread Kusha grass on the ground, I shall fast here so long Ram is not pleased. As a Brahmin creditor sits at the door of his debtor for the recovery of his money * so I shall lie down before this cottage covering myself from head to foot, and shall abstain from all food."

Sumantra, though ordered, looked at Ram's face. Thereupon, Bharat himself spread Kusha on the ground, and lay down on it.

Then Ram said, "What have I done that you will starve yourself to death ? This is a custom prevalent amongst the Brahmans but not amongst the Kshatriyas. So rise up, and give up this arduous vow."

Bharat then looked round and addressing the citizens said, "Why are you not saying anything to Ram ?"

They replied, "What you have said is in no way unjust, and the earnestness which magnanimous Ram is showing for carrying out the wishes of his father appears to be equally just. This is why we have so long remained silent."

Then Ram said, "Bharat ! you have heard what these good friends have just now said. Judge yourself their words. Just rise up, touch my body and then take water."

* Preventing ingress into and egress from the house, something like modern Kabuli Zulum.

Bharat then rose from the ground and addressing the courtiers said, "Gentlemen, hear me, and listen to me, my counsellors! I do not crave for this kingdom, nor have I instigated mother for it, nor did I know that Ram would have to take shelter in the woods. If it is decided by him to live here in obedience to father's mandate, then I shall live fourteen years in the forest as his substitute."

Ram was greatly astonished at Bharat's words, then addressing the citizens and villagers said, "You see, neither I nor Bharat should annul any gift, sale, or mortgage effected by our father during his lifetime. So it will be highly disreputable on my part to appoint a substitute of mine to live in the forest. Nothing unjust has been done by Kaikeyi, nor father has done any wrong. I know Bharat, he is full of forgiveness and also full of respect towards the superiors. On my return from the forest, I shall share the kingdom with him. Brother Bharat! I have acted as mother Kaikayi has asked, do thou now absolve father from the obligations of his promise."

When Ram and Bharat were thus talking, heavenly and royal saints and Gandharvas appeared on the scene; they praised both the brothers most lavishly and said, "He is blessed who has two righteous snos like you. We have been greatly delighted by your words." Then thinking about the destruction of Ravana they pursuaded Bharat, saying. "O hero! you are born of a noble family, and you

are wise and famous. If you care for the reputation of your father then agree to what Ram has said. We also wish that he should be absolved from his obligations by carrying out his promise."

Thus saying they went to their respective abodes.

Bharat once more entreated Ram saying "O, Arya! Fulfil the desire of Kausalya. It won't be possible for me to rule this vast kingdom, or to please the subjects. As the cultivator anxiously waits for the rain, so all the people are eagerly waiting for you. Therefore accept the kingdom and then give it to whomever you please."

Saying this, lotus-eyed Bharat, dark as a cloud, * threw himself at the feet of Ram and entreated him again and again.

Ram took up Bharat in his lap, and said in a sweet voice like that of a singing swan, "My boy! You have attained that state of mind which is only natural and which is the fruit of education and

* What colour was this? It means blue as a cloud, whereas the Sanskrit word shyam literally means green. The ancient Hindus were a white people (pure Aryans). Did it mean 'dark' in the sense as has been used by Addison and others in English, or have been described as 'blue' because they were deified in later times? Both the sky and the ocean that give us an idea of the Infinite are blue, is it, therefore, Ram, Krishna and others have been described as dark or blue as the cloud, because they were later identified with the Eternal Being?

culture. Now do your duty with the help of wise counsellors and friends. The moon may lose its beauty, the Himalayas its snow, the ocean may overstep the limits of the coast, but I shall never refrain from fulfilling the promise of my father. My darling! Don't mind, what your mother has done either for her love for you or from covetousness. You should honour and respect your mother as one ought to."

Hearing these words of Ram, resplendent with energy like the sun, and beautiful like the moon of the second lunar day of the month,* Bharat said, "O, Arya! Now take off from your feet those sandals wrought in gold, these shall protect what the people possess and procure them what they want."

Then Ram took off the sandals and offered them to Bharat. Bharat took them with a profound bow and said, "I shall dedicate the kingdom to these sandals, and for fourteen years I shall wait in expectation of you by wearing bark and subsisting upon fruits and roots and shall live in the outskirts of the city with matted locks, but if I do not find you on the first day of the fifteenth year, then I shall surely cast myself into flames."

Ram agreed to Bharat's words, and embracing him in deep affection said, "Myself and Janaki conjure you to protect mother Kausalya. Never be rude to her."

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* First day after the New moon.

Saying this Ram with tearful eyes looked at Bharat.

Then Bharat placing those bright sandals on the head of an elephant, went round Ram. Then Ram steadfast as the Himalays in piety, after paying his respetcs to Vasistha, took leave of Bharat, Satrughna, counsellors and the people in succession. At that time the voices of Ram's mothers were choked with tears. Ram too after paying homage to them with sobs entered the cottage.

CHAPTER XLII

RHARAT'S RETURN.

Then Bharat carrying Ram's sandals on his head, got upon a chariot with Satrughna and set out with sage Vasistha, Vamdeva and Javali.

After covering a long distance they arrived at the hermitage of Bharadwaj and on being questioned, Bharat said how even after repeated entreaties Ram refused to accept the kingdom and that he was taking with him the glittering sandals of Ram to install them on the throne.

Bharadwaj was mightily pleased at this news and said that death could not annihilate Dasarath since he had left such a virtuous son like him. Bharat then proceeded towards Ayodhya with his host. He crossed the rippling Jamuna and the Ganges and passed through Sringaverapur and then entered Ayodhya, resounding the streets by the deep rumbling noise of his chariot, but was pained by the deserted look of the city which appeared gloomy like a moonless night. It looked like the planet Rohini bright with the lustre of the moon (?) when she is forlorn on account of her lover being afflicted with Rahu (the enemy of the moon). The busy hum of the city was hushed, and it looked like a solitary dias after the sacrifice was over, and it looked as if a

star fell from the heaven on the extinction of its light, or like a flowery creeper with mad bees humming over it but scorched by a sudden forest-fire. The shops and stalls were closed, the streets were deserted and were full of dirts. On the whole it presented a wretched view like an uncovered and unclean drinking place with all the wine drained and strewn with broken vessels.

Bharat then addressing Sumantra broke forth in grief: "Sumantra! Why that music is not heard in Ayodhya as was heard before? Why there is intoxicating smell of liquor, fragrance of garlands and sweet incense of Aguru and Sandal? Why there is no deep rumbling noise of traffic in the city? Its former gay appearance is over. In fact, the splendour of Ayodhya has left the city along with Ram. It has no beauty now. When shall Ram come back like a grand carnival, like rain in the summer, and will gladden the hearts of the people?"

Bharat then keeping his mothers in Ayodhya said to Vasistha and others, "I shall go to Nandigram and I invite you all there. I shall suffer there the pangs of separation from my brother. Father has gone to heaven and worshipful brother is in the forest, nothing is more painful than this. Now just for the kingdom I shall be waiting for Ram, for Ram is the real king."

Then Vasistha aud others observed, "What you have said out of brotherly love is really commendable,

and quite worthy of you. You are honest and bear great love for your brother. Who will not approve of your words ?"

Bharat then asked the charioteer to yoke horses to the chariot and after greeting his mothers he got upon the car with Satrughna, and proceeded to Nandigram with counsellors and priests. Even the citizens though not invited or asked began to follow. Bharat then entered Nandigram carrying the sandals on his head. Then addressing the priests, Bharat said, "Worshipful Ram has bestowed the kingdom on me as a trust. These sandals inlaid with gold will govern the kingdom."

Then after bowing to the sandals turning to the people he said, "Speedily hold the royal umbrella over it—it is the representative of Ram. Ram has consigned the kingdom as a trust to me so I shall have to protect it till his return. When he will come back I shall myself with my own hands put on these sandals to Ram's feet and after reconveying everything to him I shall pass my days in his service and then be absolved from sin."

Thus saying Bharat with matted locks installed the sandals on the throne and out of deep respect himself stood by it by holding the umbrella and chowri in hands. Bharat then carried on the government as its subordinate and whenever anything was brought, he first formally presented it to the sandals and then it was kept in deposit in the treasury.

CHAPTER XLIII.

LEAVING THE CHITRAKUTA.

Ram while living in the Chitrakuta one day found the ascetics greatly agitated. Ram grew anxious on account of this and with great humiliation he asked their chief, 'O venerable one! Have you found me in any way deviating from the practices of former sovereigns that might cause disturbance to your minds? Has Lakshman committed any wrong through carelessness? Is not Janaki devoted to your service? Has she neglected her duty for her attachment towards me?"

Then an aged ascetic said that there was no fault on the part of Sita or of any body, but of late a Rakshasa—a formidable rover of night—was creating disturbances and thereby interrupting their religious practices and penances for which the hermits were getting themselves ready to go to the beautiful hermitage of Sage Kanwa and asked Ram to accompany them if he liked and repeatedly requested Ram to leave the place.

After this Ram had little inclination to live in that place for various reasons. At that place the memories of his mothers, brothers and relatives began to haunt him off and on. Besides the place

was rendered dirty by Bharat's hosts. Ram then decided to leave the place and left for the hermitage of saint Atri with Janaki and Lakshman.

Sage Atri received Ram, Lakshman and Janaki with warm hospitality. The famous sage then called his virtuous wife Anusuya, devoted to penance, and asked her to receive Sita, and turning to Ram said, "My boy ! when people were suffering immensely from ten years drought this pious Anusuya created fruits and roots and even caused the Ganges to flow in the Asylum by her psychic power. She passed ten thousand years in penance. Once sage Mandavya cursed the wife of a monk saying that she would turn a widow as soon as the night would be over, but this devout lady rendered one night long as ten nights by her psychic power. She is gentle and pure. Let Janaki go to her."

Ram then turned to Sita and said, "Princess ! you have, what the sage has said, to go to that pious lady for your benefit."

Thereupon Sita went to Anusuya. She was all hoary with age and was trembling like a plantain tree in the breeze. Janaki mentioned her name and after bowing at her feet she enquired about her welfare in joined hands.

Seeing Janaki, Anusuya remarked "Janaki ! you know what is righteousness, therefore by forsaking your relations, wealth and vanities you have followed Ram in exile. She who loves her husband whether

living in the city or in the forest, whether he be attached to her or ill-disposed towards her, attains great spiritual bliss. Whether the husband be a libertine or wayward or be indigent, he is always adorable to a noble charactered wife. I do not know of a more constant friend than husband, like the merits acquired by penance. Those who crave for their husbands only for carnality are harlots (in their hearts) and they are incapable of judging merits and demerits of such acts. An ill-charactered woman like that is apt to fall into vices and reap infamy. But those who are good and qualified like you are adored in heaven. So you should follow your husband in every thing."

Janaki then gently replied, "There is nothing strange that you will teach me thus. O worshipful lady! I also know that husband is always an object of respect to the wife. The wife should unhesitatingly devote herself to his services even if the husband be of bad character, but what shall I say in his case, who is self-controlled, accomplished, steadfast, constant, just, and devoted to his parents? Ram loves and honours his other mothers like Kausalya. Ram looks upon her as his mother on whom Dasarath ever cast his glance. I have not forgotten the advices imparted to me by honourable Kausalya on the eve of my coming to this dense forest, nor I have forgotten what mother asked me to observe at the time of marriage in the presence

of sacred fire. In fact, my friends and relations have instilled into my heart that devotion to the husband is the highest virtue of a wife. Savitri is adored in heaven for this devotion, and you too have attained such merit by this devotion. Rohini, the foremest of women, never for a moment appears iu the sky without the moon. In fact, many chaste and devoted women have attained heaven by their virtues."

Anusuya was greatly delighted at Sita's speech and kissing har head the venerable lady said, "My Darling, by my penance I have acquired great powers, I want to grant you some boons. Now tell me what will please you ? Tell me your desire,"

Sita was greatly astonished at this and replied with a sweet smile, "Lady ! I am more than thankful that you have been pleased with me (for your kindness towards me)." Anusuya was still more pleased with these words of Sita and said, "My daughter, I have been exceedingly delighted at your words. I shall now attain a desire of mine. Take this beautiful garland, apparel, these ornaments, and cosmetics. With these you will appear exceedingly beautiful in person. These are worthy of you, and they will be never tarnished by use. Janaki ! by daubing your body with this paint you will enhance the beauty of Ram sitting by his side, as goddess Kamala graces Narayan by her presence."

Then Sita after accepting those affectionate pre-

sents sat by her side. Then the ascetic woman asked, "My daughter, I have heard that Ram got you as wife in Swayamvara, now tell me everything about it." Then Janaki replied, "O worshipful lady, hear me then. There reigns a virtuous king named Janaka in Mithila. He found me one day while ploughing the field. He was then levelling the ground for sacrifice. I was found lying on the ground covered with mud. He was greatly astonished finding me in that situation. As he had no issue of his own, he affectionately took me in his lap. At that moment a voice from above said, 'O king, from this day she will truly be a daughter unto you.' King Janak was greatly delighted at this, and from that time he began to prosper."

"He then placed me in the hands of her queen anxious for a child, and she brought me up with motherly affection. In course of time, I gained my marriageable age. My father grew anxious and felt distressed like a poor man who has lost his money. Even if the father of the girl be an influential person like Indra he had to suffer many indignities at the hands of his equals and inferiors! When he failed to procure a desirable bridegroom for me, he thought of holding a Swayamvara. Formerly, God Varuna had given to Royal saint Devarata, a formidable bow with excellent quiver and arrows. The bow was a heavy one which the kings could not raise or bend, and my truthful father promised to confer

me on him who would be able to put string to the bow. Thus passed many a day."

"Then sage Visvamitra came to witness father's sacrifice in Mithila with Ram and Lakshman in his company whereupon Ram wished to see the bow and he bent it within the twinkle of an eye, nay he broke it into two! Then my truthful father was about to bestow me on Ram by holding up a vessel of water. * But gentle Ram did not agree to marry without his father's consent. Father then brought my father-in-law, king Dasarath, from Ayodhya and bestowed me on Ram. I have got a beautiful sister named Urmilla, she has been married to Lakshman. Since then I am devoted to my husband."

Having heard this, the pious wife of Atri kissed Sita's head and said, "I am glad to hear all these. Now the sun is on the decline. The birds are returning to their nests after a day's quest for food, chirping sweet notes in their flight. The monks after evening bath are returning in wet barks with pitchers of water on their shoulders. Look! Columns of smoke—reddish like the hue of a pigeon's neck—are rising from the sacrificial fire. Trees of thin foilage appear dense in darkness. The hermitage deer are reposing on the dais. Animals that rove in night are going about to and fro. Nothing is visible at distance. The night is come. The moon has

* Sprinkling of water with Mantras is necessary in every solemn occasion.

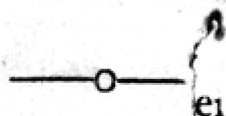
ascended the sky clothed in light. The stars have become visible. Janaki! Now I permit you to go and minister to your husband. You have gratified me by your sweet speech, now oblige me by putting on these ornaments,"

Then Sita—beautiful like the daughter of a god—adorned her person with those ornaments and went to Ram after bowing at the venerable lady's feet. Ram was delighted at the sight of these affectionate presents and Lakshman too was immensely pleased at this warm hospitality.

Ram passed the night in the hermitage of Atri. In the morning after bath, he asked the monks about the path to go to another forest. The ascetics finding Ram and Lakshman about to start said, "Prince! that part of the forest abounds in ferocious animals and blood-thirsty Rakshasas. These Rakshasas are cannibals and they feed upon the flesh of the ascetics. Do thou suppress them. This is the path through which the ascetics gather fruits. You will be able to enter into dense forest through this route."

Thus after being warned by the ascetics, and after he received blessings from them, Ram entered the deep forest with Lakshman and Janaki, as the sun enters a bank of heavy clouds.

THE END OF AYODHYA KANDAM.



THE RAMAYAN

ARANYA KANDAM.

CHAPTER I.

DESTRUCTION OF VIRADH

On entering the mighty forest of Dandaka, Ram saw hermitages of ascetics as if surrounded by a halo of spiritual glory, where lived old hermits subsisting on fruits and roots, clad in barks, and versed in the Vedas. The whole place was strewn with Kusha grass and floral offerings of worship. At some places articles of worship were kept, while at others Homa sacrifices were going on and there arose a continual chant of the Vedic hymns. It abounded in sweet fruit-bearing trees and there were tanks full of full-blown lotuses. Ram entered the sanctuary by unstringing his bow.

The hermits seeing Ram, beautiful like the newly risen moon, accompanied by Lakshman and Janaki, greeted him with sweet words. They were struck with wonder by the beauty and grace of Ram, and also at the sight of his elegant dress, and they stared at him with winkless eyes.

They, then, asked Ram to take his seat inside a cottage where they received him with due rites of hospitality, offering fruits, flowers, roots and water, and then addressing Ram they said in a body,

"Ram! You are honourable and the defender of our faith, you are our supreme lord, and the protector of all. All pay homage to the king and one-fourth of the income—who rules justly, and for this he is entitled to enjoy all good things. You are our king whether you reside in the forest or in the city. It is your duty to protect us. We have subdued our passions and do not chastise any body, so like a child in the mother's womb, we are worthy of your protection."

Saying this, the hermits offered Ram various fruits and flowers, and they tried to please Ram in various ways.

On the following day, at sunrise, Ram entered the forest with Lakshman and Janaki and found the place abounding in various kinds of wild animals. Tigers and bears were roving about freely and shrubs and creepers were torn by their movements, and tanks and pools rendered muddy, and there was a continual droning noise of beetles.

On arriving there Ram found a terrible Rakshasa, huge as a mountain peak, with wide mouth, sunken eyes, and a protruding belly. The monster was clad in a blood-stained tiger-skin and was emitting a dreadful roar by gaping his wide mouth, terrible

like the jaws of death, after piercing with his iron spike three lions, two panthers, four tigers, ten deer and the head of a huge tusker dripping fat.

That cannibal rushed at Ram, Lakshman and Janaki at their very sight like the Destruction's self and shook the earth by his terrible yells, and after snatching away Sita, he shouted from some distance, "Who are you puny creatures? Why have you entered the Dandaka forest with wife? You have matted your locks, put on barks, and carry bows in your hands! You look like ascetics, but why you two live with one wife? Why have you assumed the garb of a monk and act otherwise? This beautiful woman will henceforth be my wife. I am a Rakshasa and my name is Viradh. I constantly feed upon the flesh of the hermits and rove about freely in the forest. Now, I shall drink your blood."

Sita was greatly frightened by these words and she began to tremble like a plantain tree. Then Ram with a distressful heart addressing Lakshman said,

"Look, the daughter of king Janaka and my wife is in the lap of the monster. The desire of step-mother Kaikeyi has to-day been fulfilled. To tell you the truth, I have been more distressed to-day at the sight of Sita being touched by another than by the loss of kingdom or by father's death."

Then Lakshman in rage and sorrow replied, "Arya! You are the lord of all, and I am your

servant, then why do you lament like a helpless man? I shall kill this monster with a single shaft and the earth will drink its gore. I shall hurl the full brunt of my rage against that brute and he will fall prostrate on the ground."

The Rakshasa then cried out resounding the forest with its harsh grating voice, "Tell me who you are and where will you go?"

Ram answered, "We are Kshatriyas born of the Ikshwaku line and are of pure character and have come to the forest for some reason. We are also eager to know who you are."

Viradh said, "I am son of Yava, my mother is Shataprada and my name is Viradha.* Having gratified Brahma by my penance and devotion I

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* I have taken the liberty of condensing many such irrelevant things (though not omitted) which read like nursery tales (vide Introduction p. xii). From Aranya Kanda poetry seems to flag in various places and excessive hyperboles are its another curse. From Aranya Kanda we practically part with human company and live mostly in the presence of wild animals and other beasts, Rakshasas and Vanaras and other of superhuman elements. The pertinent question again arises: who are these Rakshasas The aborigines of the Dekhan? But Surpanakha is not dark, she has the hue of a red lotus. There were perfect beauties in Lanka! They worship the same Gods and receive boon from them for their devotion!—Translator.

have got a boon from him that none will be able to destroy me by any weapons. Now give up the hope of this woman and run away from this place or I shall I kill you immediately."

Ram grew angry at this and said, "Ah, thou wretched creature! You are surely seeking your death." Saying this, he at once discharged seven sharp arrows flaming like fire from his bow, which struck the monster and drew forth his blood. Viradh then let off Sita, rushed towards Ram brandishing a terrific lance gaping wide his mouth. Ram and Lakshman began to shower their missiles on him. Ram cut off the lance with two shafts. Ram and Lakshman then attacked him with formidable swords, dreadful as black snakes. But Viradh caught hold of them and proceeded towards the forest dragging them by force.

At that sight, Janaki raised her hands and broke forth in sorrow, "The terrible monster is taking away truthful Ram and Lakshman. Let tigers devour me now. I bow down to you, Oh, Rakshasa Chief! Please leave them and take me instead."

At these words of Janaki, Ram and Lakshman resolved to kill Viradh without further delay and Lakshman broke Viradh's left arm, and Ram his right, and Viradh fainted in agony. Ram and Lakshman, then, showered kicks and blows upon the prostrate body. Yet the monster did not expire. Finding the Rakshasa thus invulnerable to weapons Ram proposed to bury him alive and asked Lakshman

to dig a spacious hole for the same and he planted his foot upon the neck of the prostrate monster.

Hearing those words of Ram, Viradh began to speak, "O lion amongst men! I am about to die; through ignorance I could not recognise you first that you are Kausalya's son, Ram, he is Lakshman and she is worshipful Janaki. I have got this terrible form of a Rakshasa through a curse. My name is Tamvaru and I am a Gandharva. I once offended Kuvera, the lord of the Yakshas, by my absence, on account of my attachment for Rambha, and he then punished me with a curse. Being softened by my entreaties, Kuvera, at last, blessed me saying that when king Dasaratha's son Ram will slay you in battle you will get back your former state of a Yaksha. My lord! Through your grace I have been absolved from that terrible curse and I shall now be able to repair to him. Half a yoyana from this place there lives a pious hermit effulgent like the sun, named Sharabhanga. Soon go to him, he will do you good. My end is near. Throw me into a ditch. It is an immemorial custom for dead Rakshasas to enter into pits.* This is how we attain salvation."

Lakshman then dug out a spacious hole and threw the monster into the pit.

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* This apparently refers to the custom of burying the dead instead of burning them, more antique in origin. Vide Rig veda and also Dr. Rajendra Lal Mitter's works.

CHAPTER II.

SAGE SHARABHANGA

After the destruction of Viradh, Ram and Lakshman repaired towards the hermitage of Sharabhanga.

On arriving at the hermitage they saw a wonderful thing. There, they found Indra, the king of Gods, decked in heavenly jewels and clad in elegant robes, radiating a bright effulgence from his person, and worshipped by many Gods who had accompanied him. He was standing there yet his feet did not touch the ground! His chariot was stationed in the sky, yoked with yellow-coloured steeds and at a short distance shone the royal umbrella beautiful as the moon, white as the fleecy clouds and decked with variegated wreaths. Two beautiful women were fanning him with chowris from his two sides, and Gods and saints were singing his praise.

He was then talking to Sharabhanga and Ram inferred him to be Indra and then addressing Lakshman said,

"Look what a wonderful chariot! How bright and beautiful! It shines like the blazing sun in the sky! Those horses surely belong to the king of Gods of which we have heard previously. Those young men

with broad chests wearing ear-rings and holding swords in their hands appear like tigers quite unapproachable for their might. They have put on red clothes and jewel—necklaces like wreaths of flames and they appear to be of twentyfive years of age, this is the permanent age of the celestial youths. So long you wait with Janaki till I ascertain who is that effulgent person in the car." Saying this Ram proceeded towards the hermitage of Sharabhanga.

Then Indra seeing Ram coming in that direction said to the Gods. "Behold! Ram is coming hither. Let us leave this place before he greets us, so he will miss us. I shall appear before him after he conquers the great difficulties and dangers that lie before him. He will have to achieve a thing which is incapable of being performed by others."

Saying this Indra disappeared with the Gods after paying homage to Sharabhanga and inviting him to the heavenly region.

Then Ram entered the hermitage with his brother and wife. At that time, sage Sharabhanga was seated in the chamber of fire-worship. The sage received them with due hospitality and assigned a separate place for him.

Ram then asked, "Tell me, O sage! Why the king of Gods paid visit to the asylum?"

Sharabhanga replied, "My boy! I have secured Brahmaloka by severe penance and meditation. Indra came to invite me to that region. But I did not go

there knowing that a dear and worthy guest like you was close to my hermitage. You are pious, and I have been greatly gratified by your presence. I shall now repair to Brahmaloka. I have attained different regions by my religious merits and I wish you would accept them."

Then Ram versed in the Shastras replied, "O, Sage! I wish to attain blissful region by my own virtue. Now tell me where shall I take shelter in this forest."

Then Sharabhanga said, "My boy! There lives a virtuous saint named Sutikshna. He will do you good. At a short distance flows the Mandakini through a flowery vale, proceed in its opposite direction and you will then reach the hermitage. Now, I have indicated you the way, just wait for a moment, I shall cast off this infirm body in your presence, as a snake casts off his slough."

Saying this, Sharabhanga prepared a fire and after offering oblations with Mantras he entered into it. Fire at once reduced his skin, flesh, bones and hairs into ashes. Then Sharabhanga assuming a youthful, effulgent body emerged from the fire. Then after passing the regions of the saints and the Gods he reached Brahmaloka and appeared before Brahma, the grand sire of all created beings, who was greatly pleased at his sight.

After the ascension of Sharabhanga into heaven, great sages as Vaikhanasas, Valakhilya, Saupra-

khala, Marichipa, Ashmakuta, Patrahar, Dantalukhola, Unmajjaka, Gatrasyya, Asyya, Anavakashika, Salilahar, Vayabhuksha,* Akashanilaya, Sthandilashayi, Adrapatarasha and others appeared before Ram. These saints are devoted to meditation and are surrounded by a halo of spiritual shine.

They said to Ram, "As Indra amongst the Gods so you are the supreme Lord of the Ikshwaku race and of the world at large. You have become famous in the three worlds for your valour and virtue. Full and perfect religion has fixed its permanent abode in you. You will forgive us for what we say as suitors to you. The king who receives one-sixth of the people's income but does not protect his subjects incurs great sin, while, on the other hand, who governs his people like his sons reaps great fame on earth and attains Brahmaloka after death. The king is entitled even to the one-fourth of the religious merit that is acquired by saints and hermits living on fruits and roots. Ram! You are the lord of this forest abounding in Brahmans, many of whom are losing their lives in the hands of the Rakhasas. Come and see their dead bodies. They are tyrranising over the ascetics that live in the banks of the Mandakini and the Pampa lake. You are the shelter of all.

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* Some of these names signify their asceticism as Salilhar means one who lives on water only, and Vayubhaksha means who feeds only on air.

Please save us and there is no greater protector than you."

Then virtuous Ram replied, 'O, sages! Please do not talk like that. I am your obedient servant. Since I have come to the forest to redeem father from his pledge, I shall remedy this oppression of the Rakshasas."

Having assured the hermits, Ram went in company of the hermits. After crossing many deep streams, Ram arrived at a lofty peak like the Sumeru mountain. A dense forest extended at its foot and Ram on entering it found a hermitage in which was seated a sage stained with mud named Sutikshna.

Approaching him, Ram said with due humiliation, "O worshipful one! I have come to pay my respects to you. Please break your silence."

Then Sutikshna after embracing Ram, said, "O, hero! Have you come here safely? This hermitage seems to have been provided with its lord. It is for your sight that I have not yet renounced this body and repaired to heaven. I have heard that you have been deprived of your kingdom and have been dwelling in the Chitrakuta. To-day, Indra came to my place and informed me about the region I have acquired by my religious merits. My boy! I now ask for my satisfaction to live in my hemitage with Lakshman and Janaki."

Then Ram replied as Indra unto Brahma, "I shall attain the blissful region by my own piety, and I

have heard from sage Sharabhanga of Gautama—clan that you do good to all. Please tell me where am I to live in this forest ?"

Then that famous sage, Sutikshna, said, "You live in my hermitage. A large number of hermits reside here and it is also plentifully provided with fruits and roots all round the year. Only herds of deer come to this place ; they are bold but donot commit any harm, they simply bewitch the people by their tempting beauty. There is no other danger or interruption here."

Gentle Ram then said, "If I slay these deer by sharp arrows you will be pained at heart so I don't mean to live here long."

Sutikshna then said his evening prayers and when the night came the sage offered Ram an ascetic meal.

In the morning, Ram took his bath with Janaki in the translucent stream and after saying his morning prayers went to Sutikshna and said, "We are extremely grateful for your kind hospitality, now I ask your permission to leave the place. We have been greatly anxious to see the hermitages of the ascetics, and the Rishis with me are asking me to make haste. Allow us to go before the sun assumes a haughty look, like a low person who has acquired wealth by evil means."

Ram then greeted Sutikshna with Lakshman and Janaki, and Sutikshna blessing them said, "Go now safely with Lakshman and Sita will follow you like

a shadow. Behold the beautiful asylums of the ascetics residing in the Dandaka forest. You will find the woods in bloom and visited by deer and lovely feathered tribes, echoed by the wild notes of peacocks, lakes and pools strewn with lotuses and water-lilies, and visited by swans and ducks, and you will come across there beautiful fountains."

Ram then went round the sage and took his leave. Large-eyed Janaki then handed over swords and bows to their hands.

When Ram was about to set out with Lakshman Sita affectionately said, "My lord! Virtue can only be acquired by renouncing all low desires. There are three kinds of sins, falsehood, adultery and anger without any provocation. The last two are more grave than the first one. You have never told any lies, nor you will do in future. You have no lustful hankering for another's wife, nor you will have that, rather you are devoted to your own wife. Virtue and truth are present in you. You are truthful, learned and have control over your senses. You are firm to your vows and obedient to your father. But you are now engaged in that sinful act which one commits through ignorance by killing a creature without any offence. You have agreed to protect the ascetics living in the forest; you are, therefore, proceeding with Lakshman with bows and arrows to the Dandaka forest. But I have become greatly anxious on account of your departure. I am thinking

of your actions and of the means that may contribute to your happiness, but at every step I feel greatly anxious on thy account. I don't wish that you should go to the Dandaka forest. If you go there you will surely be involved in a conflict with the Rakshasas, for the presence of arms highly inflames Kshatriya valour."

"My lord! Formerly a pious ascetic was engaged in religious meditation in the calm recess of the woods. Indra, in order to disturb his religious meditation, once appeared in the guise of a warrior and kept his sword as a trust with the ascetic. The ascetic then in fear of the violation of the trust, used to roam about the forest with that sword in hand, even when he went to gather fruits and roots. From this constant carrying of the sword, the ascetic by degrees grew cruel, and at last he gave up all religious meditations and became engaged in the slaughter of all creatures. This story I have related to you just to illustrate that as fire produces change in the fuel so contact of arms brings about a change in the human mind. My husband! Of course, I donot pretend to give you any advice but I humbly remind you of this out of love and deep regard for you. It is not proper to kill any creature unless it does some grave injury. A Kshatriya hero should do only that much which might be necessary for the protection of the ascetics living in the forest and nothing more. Ah! Where are arms, where is the forest? Where is religious meditation

and where is Kshatriya valour? These are quite antagonistic to each other. Please hold in respect what is proper to an ascetic. Resume the duties of a Kshatriya after your return to Ayodhya. You have been obliged to abdicate the throne and repair to the forest and my father-in-law and mother-in-law will be greatly pleased if you lead the life of a hermit. From righteousness comes wealth and from wealth happiness; in short everything comes from religion.* Intelligent people acquire righteousness even by torturing their bodies but religion can not come from pleasure or happiness. My lord! You know everything and nothing is unknown to you. Who can aspire to advise you in matters of religion? I have said all these simply from the fickleness of a woman. Consult with Lakshman and decide your course of action."

Hearing Janaki's speech Ram said, "O noble lady! You have justly expounded the duties of a Kshatriya out of love. What shall I say in reply? You have yourself said that a Kshatriya should bear arms so that there may not exist any word as 'the distressed.'

* The Sanskrit phrase: Dharma, Artha, Kama, Moksha is very difficult to translate—Dharma apparently means righteousness though literally signifies religion; Artha literally means wealth, but it signifies something like assets (as used in Political Economy), that is to say, the means that will enable one to obtain his objects of desire which are designated by the word Kama—covetousness or lust.

Now, the hermits of the Dandaka forest in distress have applied to me for help. They are harmless people and live on fruits and roots, but the cruel Rakshasas have caused great discomfort to them, cannibal monsters are feeding on their flesh. I have promised them all help that lies in me, and asked them what I was to do. They asked for my protection and said that they could have themselves destroyed the Rakshasas by their spiritual power but that would take away much from their religious merit, so they did not wish to do that and for this reason they have so long refrained from cursing them. They further said that they were living in the forest depending on me. Without the slightest remorse I can give up my life, nay can even renounce you along with Lakshman, but can not swerve from my promise given to the Brahmans. How can I act otherwise what I would have done even without their asking? Janaki! I have been much glad at what you have said out of your love and good wishes towards me. Nobody says any thing to him who is not dear to him, you are worthy of your birth. You are dearer to me than life, so please approve of my desire."

Having said this, Ram proceeded towards the romantic forest with Lakshman carrying the bow in his hand. Ram went first, Sita was in the middle and Lakshman followed them with bow in his hand.

CHAPTER III.

SAGE AGASTYA.

They passed various streams, lakes and hills in their journey. They then came to a lake measuring about a Yoyana. Its water was clear as crystal and was beautiful with white and red lotuses. Aquatic birds were sporting on its surface and elephants stood on its banks. Sweet music was being heard on its bank but no human being was not to be seen. Ram and Lakshman were greatly astonished at this, and they asked a hermit named Dharmabhrit, "It is indeed a wonderful thing. We are greatly curious to know something about it." Dharmabhrit said, "This tank is known as the Pampasara; formerly, sage Mandakarni constructed it by psychic power. Its waters never become dry. Once upon a time Mandakarni practised severe penances for ten thousand years being seated within this tank. The Gods got frightened at this; thinking that the Rishi might ask for some of their ranks, they engaged five Nymphs to decoy the hermit. The Rishi fell a prey to his passions, and those Nymphs became his wives. Mandakarni then grew young by his yogic power and he built a secret chamber for those beauties. They then lived happily

with him. The sage is now amorously sporting with them, it is the sweet jingling sounds of their ornaments that you hear."

Ram then found a beautiful and bright hermitage where he lived with Lakshman and Sita. After some time he quitted that cottage and lived at some place for some months, somewhere for a year, at some place for four months, somewhere for six months or for a month-and-half, or for several months together. Thus ten years were passed.

After this Ram came back to sage Sutikshna's hermitage, and one day he respectfully said, "O, holy sire! I have heard from many that the great sage Agastya lives in this forest, but this is such a vast forest that I can not ascertain that place. Now tell me where is that beautiful penance-grove that I may go there to pay my respects with Lakshman and Janaki. It is my earnest desire to attend upon him."

Sutikshna cheerfully replied, "I thought that I should myself ask you to do so, but fortunately you have asked it yourself. I shall tell you where lies the hermitage of Agastya. After going four yoyanas to the south you will come across the hermitage of Idhmavaha, brother of Agastya. The place is beautiful and abounds in Pippali trees, and there are plenty of fruits and flowers and crystal lakes. Pass one night there, and you will find the hermitage of Agastya at a distance of one yoyana. The spot is highly beautiful and abounds in various kinds of

trees. If you are desirous of seeing him you may start even to-day."

Ram then greeting Sutikshna set out for Agastya's hermitage with Lakshman and Sita. Ram covered a long distance by observing the romantic beauties of the woods, hills and streams. Ram then cheerfully observed, "Surely, the hermitage of Idhmavaha is quite nigh. Look! How the trees are bent down with fruits and flowers, a pungent smell of the ripe pippalis is coming from the forest. Fuels and faggots are scattered here and there, and the ground is strewn with bright Kusha grass, and blue columns of smoke are rising from the woods. From what has been said by sage Sutikshna, it is clear that this is Idhmavaha's asylum. His brother Agastya, for the good of mankind, has rendered the southern quarter habitable by destroying a Daitya cruel as death.

"Formerly two formidable Asuras named Ilval and Vatapi used to live here and used to slaughter Brahmans. Cruel Ilval assuming the guise of a Brahman used to invite in Sanskrit the Brahmans to Sradh ceremony, and when the invited Brahmans came he used to feed the Brahmans by cooking his brother, Vatapi, who wore the form of a sheep. When the meal was over, Ilval shouted aloud, 'Come out, Vatapi'; Vatapi, too, bleating like a ram came out by tearing the bodies of the Brahmans. Thus they have killed many Brahmans. Once

Agastya at the request of the Gods ate Vatapi, being invited to Sradh. After giving water for washing the hands, Ilval cried, 'Come out, Vatapi." Then wise Agastya replied with a laugh, 'Ilval! Your brother in the form of a sheep has repaired to the abode of death being digested by fire so he can not come out.'

"Then Ilval hearing of his brother's death rushed towards the sage in fury, but he was at once reduced to ashes by the fiery look of the great ascetic. This is the hermitage of Idhmavaha—brother of that great Agastya who has performed that arduous feat out of pity towards the Brahmans."

The sun went down and the evening came in. Ram then said his evening prayers and accepted the hospitality of Idhmavaha with Lakshman and Janaki and passed the night there. In the morning Ram took his leave and set out for the hermitage of Agastya.

Ram proceeded surveying the picturesque woods abounding in aquatic Kadamva, Panasa, Asoka, Tinisha, Naktamal, Madhuka, Vilva and Tinduka and other flower trees. These trees were covered with flowery creepers, roughly handled by the elephants with their trunks, and abounding in monkeys and wild birds.

At this sight, Ram said to Lakshman, "I find the place exactly as I have heard about it. The woods are green and the beasts and birds appear to be

gentle. Probably the hermitage of the great sage is not far. This hermitage no doubt belongs to the famous sage Agastya who has rendered the southern quarter safe by destroying the death-like Asura. For fear of him the Rakshasas do not dare to enter this place, but only cast their looks from distance. From the time he has fixed his abode the rovers of the night have forgotten their former hostility and have become gentle. It is said that no danger befalls him whoever takes the name of Agastya."

"The Vindhya mountain was rising high to obstruct the rays of the sun but it has ceased to do so in obedience to Agastya's command. This is the hermitage of that long-lived and famous hermit. He is adorable, pious and is always engaged in doing good to the honest people. He will do us good if we go to him. I shall pass here the rest of the term of my exile. The Gandharvas, Siddhas and the Rishis here pass their time in meditation and in 'spare fast.' Here is no room for any cruel, deceitful or vicious person. Here the Gods, Yakshas, Patangas, Uragas live on frugal meal. Here the ascetics obtain salvation, and after casting off their mortal bodies, and assuming new forms they ascend to heaven in cars resplendent as the Sun. Lakshman! We have arrived at the sacred hermitage. You go first and inform the great sage of my arrival with Janaki."

Lakshman on entering the asylum said to one of

the disciples of Agastya, "The eldest son of King Dasarath, heroic Ram, has come with his wife Janaki to see the sage. I am his younger brother. You might have heard that I am devoted to him. We have come to this dreadful forest in obedience to our father's mandate. We wish to see worshipful Agastya, please do what you think best."

Maharshi Agastya hearing this from his disciple said, "It is indeed my good luck that Ram has come to see me. I was expecting this. Go, my boy, just bring him with his brother and wife with due honours."

The pupil then hurried to Lakshman and told him that Ram might come to see the great sage.

Ram then entered the hermitage abounding in gentle deer, and beheld there the seats of Brahma, Agni, Rudra, Indra, Surya, Soma, Bhaga, Kuvera, Vayu, Dhata. Bidhata, Varuna holding the noose, Gayatri, of Vasuki, of Garura, of Kartikeya and of Dharma.*

Here sage Agastya with his disciples was awaiting the arrival of Ram. Ram on seeing that effulgent sage said to Lakshman, "My boy! The sage

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* The particular places assigned for the worship of each one of the above mentioned deities. They are the Vedic Gods, but in the yoga system there are different seats or bodily postures of such names.

Agastya has issued from his retreat. I can infer him to be Agastya from his solemn gravity."

Thus saying Ram saluted the great sage beaming as the Sun. Agastya embraced Ram and offered him seat and water for washing his feet and enquired after his welfare. After offering oblations into fire the hermit presented Arghya and food to them according to the rites of Vanaprastha life. Ram sat down with joined hands when Agastya resumed his seat.

Then sage Agastya said, "My boy! If the guest is not received with due hospitality even an ascetic is doomed to feed upon his own flesh like a false witness in the next world. You are king, righteous, heroic, noble and adorable; you have graced my hermitage as a dear guest." With these words Agastya offered plenty of flowers, fruits and roots, and said, "My boy! Indra has presented this golden, celestial bow of Vishnu beset with diamonds, made by Vishva Karma and infallible arrows glittering as the Sun's rays named Brahmadatta. This inexhaustible quiver is full of arrows flaming as fire and there is in golden scabbard a sword with golden hilt. Formerly Vishnu conquered the Asuras with this bow. Now take these arms as Indra carries the thunderbolt."

Saying this Agastya presented all those weapons to Ram, and said, "Ram! I am glad that you have come to see me with Janaki. Lakshman! May you

be happy. I have been much pleased with you all. I am sure you are fatigued by the journey, specially Janaki must be eager for rest. This tender girl never suffered any hardship before. She has come to the forest only out of her deep love for her husband. Do that as she may feel comfortable here. She has done a very arduous thing by following you. It is the nature of women from the beginning of creation that they become attached to persons in affluence but leave them in adversity. In their attachments they are unstable like lightning, in snapping affection they are sharp as weapons, and in evil they are quick as the wind, or the winged bird. But your wife is free from all these faults and she has thus become foremost of the chaste women like Arundhati in heaven. The place will no doubt be sanctified if you live here with her and Lakshman."

At this Ram modestly replied, "You are my superior and worthy of respect and I think myself fortunate and blessed since you have been pleased with our conduct. Now kindly indicate to me a part of the forest where there is no scarcity of water so that I may live there happily by building a cottage."

Thereupon Agastya plunged himself in meditation for a moment and then said, "My boy! There is a highly beautiful place called Panchavati at a distance of two yoyanas from this place. There is plenty of of fruits and roots. There is no scarcity of water, and there is plenty of birds and deer. Go, ouild there

a cottage and live happily with Lakshman. My boy! I have ascertained your feelings by my yoga. You first resolved to live here, but since you have already changed your mind I ask you to repair to the Panchavati. That place is not very far from here. Janaki will surely feel happy there. You will be able to protect the hermits living in that peaceful, secluded forest. You possess valour and also good manners. Yonder is the Madhuka forest. Proceed towards the north of the forest by fixing your attention on the Nagrodha trees, you will then come by a hill and close to it lies the picturesque Panchavati."

After Agastya's words, Ram saluted the great sage and proceeded with Lakshman and Janaki carrying the bow and the quiver with him. On his way Ram saw a formidable bird of a very huge size, and thinking it to be a monster he questioned, "Who art thou?"

Thereupon the bird replied with a sweet voice, "My boy! I am a friend of your father."

Thereupon Ram bowed down and asked his name and lineage. The bird then in the course of giving his genealogy began with a narration from the beginning of the creation and said, "My boy! I shall now tell you from the beginning who were known as Prajapatis in ancient time. Listen to me. Of the Prajapatis, Kardama was the first. Then came Vikrita, Shesa, powerful Sthanu, Marichi, Atri, Kratu,

Pulastya, Pulaha, Angira, Prachetas, Daksha, Vivaswat, Aristhanemi and Kashyapa. Sixty daughters were born to Prajapati Daksha, and of them Kashyapa married eight. Their names were Aditi, Diti, Danu, Kalika, Tamra, Krodhavasha, Manu and Anala. After marriage Kashyapa told his wives to bring forth children who would be lord of the three worlds like himself. At this Aditi, Diti, Danu and Kalika agreed but some of them disagreed. Afterwards bight Vasus, twelve Rudras, twin Aswini kumars and others thirty-three* Gods were born of Aditi's womb, and the Daityas† were born of Diti. Then Aswagriva was born of Danu; and Narak and Kalaka were born of Kalika. Kraunchi was born of Tamra; Kraunchi, Bhasi, Shyeni, Dhritarasthri, and Shuki these famous five daughters were born of Tamra. Then Ulaka was born of Kraunchi; Bhasa was born of Bhasi, Shyena and Gridhra from Shyeni. Swans, ducks, chakravakas were born from Dhritarasthri and Nata from Shuki. Nata gave birth to a daughter called Vinata. Afterwards ten daughters were born of Krodhavasha's womb and they were Mrigi, Mrigamada, Hari, Bhadramada, Matangi, Sharduli, Shweta, Surubhi, Sulakshmana, Surasa and Kadru. All the deer born

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* This thirty-three subsequently in popular imagination have been elaborated into thirty-three millions.

† Corresponds to the Titans of Greek mythology.

of Mrigi; Bhallaka, Chamaras and Sumaras were born of Mrigamada; a daughter named Iravati was born of Bhadramada, and her son is Airavata. Lions and monkeys were born of Hari's womb. Tigers and Go-langulas were born of Sharduli; elephatns were born of Matangi and the elephants guarding the cardinal points of the world were born of Shweta. Two daughters were born to Surabhi. Rohini and famous Gandharvi. Bovine cattle were born of Rohini and horses of Gandharvi. Surasa gave birth to many-hooded serpents and Kadru delivered other snakes.

Afterwards man was born of Manu.* Brahmans were born from the mouth, the Kshatriyas from the arms, the Vaishyas from the thighs and the Sudras

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* Here we get in simple folklore a story of the creation of various species of living beings, and in this gradation man comes last. Modern science has established this point beyond all reasonable doubts. This indeed is no science, but the doctrine of evolution (though not Darwinism) was first established and discussed in India. (Vide Dr. Draper's History of the conflict between Science and Religion and also his Intellectual Development of Europe.) There is another popular notion that, the word Manava comes from Vivaswata Manu, but late Pandit Umesh Chandra Vidyaratna first proved it to be a mistake, as the words Aditya, Daitya, Danava have been derived from Aditi, Diti and Danu so also the word Manava from the word mother Manu here alluded to as wife of Kashyapa. Absolutely a new light

from her feet. All sacred fruit-bearing trees were born of Anala. Garura and Aruna were born of Vinata—Shuki's grand daughter. I am the son of that Aruna named Jatayu. Shyeni is my mother and my elder brother is Sampati. Ram! If you wish, I may be a friend to you in your forest-life. When you will be out with Lakshman in quest of fruits I shall protect Janaki."

Then Ram embraced him in delight and bowed to him in respect and heard from him the tales of friendship between his father and the bird. Ram then trusted him with the charge of Janaki's protection and entered the Panchavati forest.

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was thus thrown. The learned Pandit thus cleared up many mystic phenomena from the Vedas and Upanishidas. A vastly erudite scholar about whose profound learning in the ancient Sanskrit literature Lokamanya Tilak bore eloquent testimony in a meeting and raised subscriptions to help him to write a commentary of the Rigveda in Sanskrit, some parts of which were afterwards published, but which could not be completed on account of his death, was often jecred at by the orthodox section for his fearlessness, advanced opinions and bold attacks just for which he could not prosper in life—Translator.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PANCHAVATI.

Ram then arriving at the Panchavati forest full of ravenous animals said to Lakshman, "We have reached the place spoken to by worshipful Agastya. This blossoming forest is Panchavati. Survey it round and select a site where we may build a cottage. Just find out a place where Janaki will feel happy and we may be comfortable in every respect, where there are tanks and where the water is transparently clear, and that abounds in fruits, flowers, faggots and Kusha grass. You are most competent in these things."

Then gentle Lakshman with joined hands spoke to Ram in presence of Janaki, "Arya! I shall ever serve you as your obedient servant. You yourself please select a spot and then order me to build a cottage."

Ram was greatly pleased with Lakshman's words and then selected a highly commendable site and taking Lakshman there Ram said, "My boy! Here is abundance of flower-trees, the ground is even and beautiful. At a short distance from this spot there is a beautiful pool interspersed with sweet-scented lotuses, pink and red, like the newly-risen dawn. There

lies the Godavari spoken to by sage Agastya. The stream is always visited by the swans, cranes and the chakravakas. Many thirsty deer come to drink its water and blossoming trees stand on its bank. Look there is the high range of hills with its caves and hollows. Hear the peacock's shrill cries. The hill abounds in gold, silver and copper, and for their presence it looks like an elephant with its body painted in variegated colours! Summits are crowned with Salas, Tamalas, Palmyras, Dates, Panasas, Jalakadamba, Trimish, Mangoes, Asokas, Tilakas, Champakas, Ketakis, Shyandanes, Sandal woods, Kadamvas, Lachukas, Lakuches, Dharvas, Aswakarnas, Khadiras, Shamis, Kinshukas, Patalas and other flower and fruit-bearing trees entwined with creepers and parasites. The place is indeed romantic. Henceforth we shall live here in friendship with Jatayu."

Then powerful Lakshman in a short time constructed a beautiful cottage resting on gracefnl pillars. Its well-levelled floor was made of earth. Its bamboo-frame-work was covered with strongly tied Sami branches, Kusha, Kasha, and Shara leaves. After erecting the hut Lakshman went to the Godavari stream. After bathing in its water he plucked lotuses, gathered fruits and then returned to the cottage and after offering flowers and performing due rites for dwelling in a new house, Lakshman asked Ram to enter the cottage. Ram and Janaki were

exceedingly delighted at the sight of the cottage., and after a deep embrace Ram said in affectionate words, "My darling! I am more than delighted. You have accomplished a wonderful feat. Accept my embrace as thy reward. You are a reader of human heart. You are virtuous. When a son like you survives, father appears to be still living through you, though he is gone to the other world."

After this Ram lived happily for sometime in that forest like a God in heavenly region.

After the Autumn, came in the season of mists and dews. One day, at that time, Ram was going to the Godavari and obedient and humble Lakshman followed him with a pitcher along with Janaki.

On his way Lakshman said, "O, sweet one! The season that is dear to you has come. The year seems to have been adorned by it.* The skin has become rough with dews, the earth is full of crops, water is difficult to touch, fire is agreeable. By this time the people in order to take new rice perform a sacrifice known as the Agrahayan for the satisfaction of the Gods and dead ancestors. There is plenty of eatables in the country, and there is no scarcity of milk and articles prepared from it. Princes bent upon conquests reconnoitre the ground now. The sun's motion is now to the south. The northern quarter now looks shorn of beauty, like a woman

* The season Hemanta corresponds to early winter.

without the scarlet mark* on her brow. The Himalayas being by nature the home of snow have now justified its name having the sun at a greater distance. The mid-day sun appears to be agreeable and none feels fatigued by a journey, only shade and water are unbearable now. The sun's glare has diminished, dews fall in profusion, the forest has become lonesome, and the lotuses have been destroyed by the frost. Now, the nights are always grey with frost, no body can now lie in an uncovered place, the hours of night are long and they can only be measured by the sight of the constellation of Pushya. The splendour of the moon has fallen to the sun and the lunar disc is now always enveloped in mists, like a mirror (when breathed upon) grown misty by the vapour of breath. The shine of the full moon appears dim through frost, like Sita grown pallid by heat. The western breeze has become intensely cold. The whole forest is covered with a veil of mist, and wheat and barley crops look beautiful in the sun with cranes and Kraunchis in them. Golden paddy with their ears slightly bent with grains have grown brownish yellow like dates. Its rays being diffused through mists, the mid-day sun appears like the moon. In the morning the sun's

* Tilaka—by way of decoration, on the forehead of a woman—a circular red mark made by some ungent substance between the two brows.

rays are feeble and yellow, and they look highly beautiful when they fall on the green grass wet with dews. Look! How the thirsty elephants draw away their trunks at the touch of cold water. Ducks, cranes and swans and such other aquatic fowls though have arrived on the bank of the stream, but do not dip in the water, as the coward do not enter a field of battle. The flowerless woods being enveloped with frosty mists at night and with dews in the morning seem to be buried in sleep! The water of the river is enveloped in dense fog and the sand of the river-banks are wet with dews, and the presence of aquatic birds is inferred through the mist only from their cries. Water everywhere, due to the fall of snow and mildness of the sunshine, is cold and sweet to drink. The lotuses have been destroyed by the frost, only their stalks remain, but their pollens, petals and pericarps have fallen, there is no more their former beauty. Arya! By this time, virtuous Bharat is practising greater asceticism at Nandigram, being overwhelmed with sorrow for his deep brotherly love for you. He has discarded the throne and all things of luxury and does live on frugal meals and lie on the bare ground. Perhaps, by this time, Bharat too is bathing in the Sarayu being surrounded by his people. Bharat is noble, truthful, religious, of subdued senses and of sweet speech. He is beautiful. His arms are long, reaching up to the knees, his eyes are lotus-

like, lean waist, and his colour is of soft green. That lotus-eyed hero has forsaken all pleasures of life and has clung fast to you. Though you are living in the forest but he is leading an ascetic life (in the city). He will surely secure heavenly bliss. It is said that a man resembles his mother in qualities, but it is otherwise with Bharat. Alas! How Kaikeyi, whose husband was Dasarath and whose son is Bharat, could be so cruel?"

Ram could not bear any aspersion against Kaikeyi and said,

"My boy! You may talk of Bharat, the lord of the Ikshwaku race, but do not blame mother Kaikeyi. Though I am firm in my resolve, but love for Bharat makes me unsteady. I do often remember his sweet delightful words sweet as manna. Lakshman, I know not when I shall again meet Bharat and others?"

Ram, after expresssng his grief in those words, bathed in the Godavari wiih Lakshman and Janaki. Then they performed Tarpans in honour of the Gods and to the manes of the ancestors and then they said their prayers to the Sun and the Gods. As God Rudra after bath looks beautiful with Nandi and Parvati, so Ram looked after his bath. They then returned to their cottage after performing their morning services.

CHAPTER V.

SURPANAKHA.

Honoured by the hermits, Ram was seated with Janaki in the cottage and at that time he looked like the Moon in conjunction with the star Chitra, and was talking with Lakshman on various things. At that time a Rakshashi wandered leisurely there. She was Surpanakha, the sister of Ravana—the lord of the Rakshasas.

On arriving there the Rakshasi beheld beautiful Ram, dark as a blue lotus, with lotus-eyes, endowed with royal splendour, whose personal beauty was like that of a Cupid, who was mighty like Indra, wore matted locks and possessed the gait of an elephant. The Rakshasi was at once smitten with love. (But lo the contrast!) Ram had a graceful countenance whereas the Rakshasi had a hedious one; Ram's waist was lean, but she had a bulky abdomen. Ram had an elegant head of hair whereas she had coppery locks. Ram's voice was sweet, but hers was grating; Ram was young, she was old; Ram was gentle, she was fierce; Ram was righteous, but she was vicious; Ram had mellifluous accents, but her words were harsh! In a word, Ram was beautiful, she was hedious. But being maddened with desire, the

Rakshasi asked, "I find matted locks on your head and bow and arrows in your hands; tell me why you have come in the guise of a hermit with your wife to this region of the Rakshasas?"

Then Ram with his usual candour relating to her everything said, "There was a mighty king by the name of Dasarath. I am his eldest son, and my name is Ram. He is Lakshman, my younger brother, he is greatly attached to me. She is my wife named Janaki. I have come to live in the forest in obedienee to the wishes of my father and mother. Now tell me who art thou? Whose daughter are you and in what family you are born? You seem to be a Rakshasi from your form. However, why have you come hither?"

Then Surpanakha smitten with lust replied, "I am Surpanakha, I can assume different forms at my will and range about the forest by striking terror into everybody's heart. You might have heard of Ravan, the lord of the Rakshasas, he is my brother; and who is subject to long sleep, that supremely powerful Kumbhakarna, and pious Bibhishan, inimical to the Rakshasas, and formidable Khara and Dushana are also my brothers. But I have even surpassed them by my prowess. Ram! You are beautiful and I have fallen in love at the very first sight. I possess wonderful powers and can go wherever I list; I ask you to be my husband for ever. What will you then do with Sita? Sita is deformed and

ugly and she is in no way worthy of you. It is I who is worthy of you, so look upon me as your wife. This woman, Sita, is bad-looking with a lean waist and is unchaste. I shall devour her immediately along with Lakshman. You will therefore be free to roam about the forest with me at your will."

Thereupon Ram with a playful smile addressing Surpanakha, began in jest,

"O worshipful lady! I am married. This Sita is my wife and she is always with me. A co-wife will surely be highly disagreeable to a woman like you. Here is my younger brother, valiant Lakshman. He is good-natured and beautiful and is leading a life of celebacy. He is quite ignorant of conjugal felicity, so he is desirous of taking a wife unto him; for your beauty, this youngman is, no doubt, worthy of you in every respect. O, large-eyed beauty! Receive him as your husband, as the sun's rays seek for the Sumeru mountain. If you be his wife you wont have any fear of a co-wife."

Surpanakha instantly left Ram and addressing herself to Lakshman said, "Beautiful as you are, I am the only worthy spouse of you. Now accept me as your wife. You will live happily with me in the Dandaka forest."

Then eloquent Lakshman with a smiling countenance gracefully replied, "You see, I am myself a servant, what will you gain being my wife? Will you be content to live like a maid-servant? Ah, my

red* beauty! I am under worshipful Ram, be therefore the younger wife of Ram, your desire will be fulfilled and you will pass your days in happiness. He will surely accept you by discarding that ugly, unchaste, and lean, old hag. O, paragon of beauty! What intelligent man can remain addicted to a woman by neglecting such supreme grace?"

Hedious-looking Surpanakha, however, could not understand the joke and took Lakshman's words to be serious, and thereupon, under the intoxication of lust, she said to Ram, "You are not showing me any affectionate regard by discarding that ugly, lean, old hag of unchaste character, so I shall devour her in your presence and shall enjoy supreme felicity by getting rid of the co-wife."

Saying this the Rakshasi, red as a burning cinder, rushed towards gazelle-eyed Janaki in extreme wrath as if a huge meteor was rushed towards the Rohini star. Thereupon heroic Ram, preventing the Rakshasi, terrible as the noose of death, spoke to Lakshman in wrath, "My boy! Henceforth never crack jokes with a low-bred woman. Look, Janaki is half dead with fear. Punish her immediately by deforming this hedious, mad Rakshasi infuriated."

Thus being spoken to, powerful Lakshman in great anger drew his sword and in the presence of Ram

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* One of the hue of a red lotus.

chopped off the ears and nose of Surpanakha. The Rakshasi was drenched in blood and burst into terrible yells, like the rumblings of a thunder-cloud, and ran away into the thick of the forest with upraised arms.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FIRST CLASH

Surpanakha then appeared before her brother Khara in Janasthan who was seated surrounded by the Rakshasas, and she fell on the ground like a bolt from the blue.

Thereupon Khara of fierce energy seeing her lying on the ground and drenched in blood asked in rage, "Rise up. Banish your fears and amazement. Tell me who has deformed your beauty? Who has hurt the black snake by his digital end, that was lying harmless? The miscreant through ignorance does not know that he has unknowingly drunk deadly poison and that death's noose lies round his neck. You are yourself formidable and can assume different forms at will, now tell me where had you been? Who has disgraced you thus? Who is so powerful among the Gods, Gandharvas, Spirits and the Rishis? I don't find anybody in the three worlds that would dare injure you? However, as a thirsty swan drinks only milk mixed with water leaving the latter, so among the Gods I shall pick out and kill thousand-eyed Indra. Whose frothy blood mother-earth desires to drink, his marrow being pierced by my arrows? Upon whose corpse the ravenous birds want to feed tearing the flesh? Whom I shall

attack none amongst the Gods and the Gandharvas will be able to protect that wretched. Sister! Shake off thy stupor by degrees. Tell me who is that despicable creature that humbled you in the forest by his prowess?"

Then Surpanakha said with tearful eyes, "Two sons of king Dasarath live in the Dandaka forest. Their names are Ram and Lakshman. They are young, beautiful and valiant. Their eyes are long like the petals of a lotus and they are clad in barks and black deer-skins. They live on fruits and roots and lead an ascetic life. They look like the king of the Gandharvas and bear regal signs on their persons. I can't say whether these two brothers are Gods or demons. I have seen a perfect beauty decked in ornaments in their company, and for her they have maltreated me. Now, I desire to drink the warm blood of that crooked woman and of the two brothers, and you will have to satisfy my desire."

After Surpanakha's speech, Khara in extreme rage summoned fourteen formidable Rakshasas, terrible as death, and addressing them said, "Lo! Two armed youngmen, clad in barks and deer-skin have entered the Dandaka forest with a woman in their company. Kill those men along with that wicked woman. My sister has resolved to drink their blood to-day. Go now and accomplish the task by your valour. She will drink their blood in delight."

At this command of Khara, the Rakshasas were swiftly despatched with Surpanakha like clouds driven by a gale.

On arriving at the hermitage Surpanakha pointed out Ram and Lakshman together with Sita.

Ram, seeing the Rakshasas, said to heroic Lakshman,

"Remain with Sita just for a short time, let me destroy the Rakshasas that have come with Surpanakha."

"As you please," replied Lakshman.

Ram then strung his bow wrought in gold and addressing the Rakshasas said, "Hear me. We are sons of king Dasarath and have came to the Dandaka forest with Sita. We live upon fruits and roots and lead an ascetic life. Why do you bear malice against us ? You are thoroughly vicious and tyrranic over the hermits and at their request I have taken up this bow for your destruction. Stand there where you are, advance not a step further. If you have any love for life then go back."

Thereupon those fierce Rakhasas, the destroyers of the Brahmans, with red hot eyes, said to Ram, whose valour they had not as yet witnessed, "You have provoked our noble lord, Khara ; you will have to lay down your life in to-day's fight. You are alone, whereas we are many, not to speak of any fight but what power do you possess that you can

stand before us? This day, surely you will have to give up your arms being vanquished by our lances."

With these words the Rakshasas with their weapons rushed in fury towards him and threw their fourteen lances at Ram. Thereupon invincible Ram cut off their darts with his golden shafts and in great rage took up from the quiver sharp Naracha arrows, whetted on stone and glittering like the sun's rays, and discharged them at the Rakhasas, as Indra hurls the thunderbolt. Those shafts after penetrating the hearts of the Rakshasas entered the earth, like snakes into ant-hill. The Rakshasas gave up their ghosts and fell prostrate like cut-down trees. At that sight, Surpanakha whose bleeding had ceased a little, but from whose wounds blood was still oozing out like gum exuding from a tree, ran to Khara and began to cry bitterly.

Khara seeing his sister again coming to him as if presaging some evil, broke forth in anger, "I deputed formidable Rakshasas, living on flesh, on your behalf, why have you then come again and why weep so bitterly? Those are my trusted followers and wish me always good, and nobody can kill them by violent attack. It is not possible that they have not carried out my orders. Then why are you crying, saying 'Ah! My Lord!' Why are you rolling in the dust like a (crushed) snake? I am eager to know the cause. Arise, don't cry any more."

Irrepressible Surpanakha at these consolations

of Khara, wiping off her tearful eyes replied, "When I first came to you with my lopped off nose and ears you consoled me and despatched with me fourteen fierce Rakshasas, but they were all instantly killed by the heart-penetrating arrows of Ram! I have been greatly alarmed at this astonishing feat of Ram. Hence I have again come to you for shelter. To speak the truth, I see terror all round me. Now, if you have any commisseration for the Rakshasas, root out that thorn of the Rakshasas living in the Dandaka forest. He is my bitter foe. If you can not exterminate him I shall give up my life even in your presence. Meseems that you won't be able to stand before him, even if you face him with your army on the field of battle. You have the vanity of being valiant though you are not so. Ah, you are a stain to our line! Leave Janasthan with your friends without any delay. If you cannot slay these two puny men then you must be weak, how can you then live here? In short, you yourself will be soon destroyed by Ram's valour. Dasarath's son Ram is exceedingly powerful, his brother Lakshman too is quite formidable. Look, how I have been disfigured."

Huge-bellied Surpanakha thus lamenting before Khara was overwhelmed with grief and began to cry beating her abdomen repeatedly.

CHAPTER VII

WRATH OF KHARA.

Khara being thus insulted in the presence of the Rakshasas, addressing her in angry words said, "Sister! I have been greatly offended by this taunt of yours. This insult is unbearable like salt administered to a wound. Ram is a frail human being. I do not count him at all in my valour. He will die this day at my hand for his misdeeds. Now restrain your tears. Don't be frightened any more. I shall despatch Ram along with Lakshman to the abode of death. Drink his blood when he will fall by my axe." Being delighted with these words of her brother she began to praise Khara again through her levity. Then Khara being first reprimanded then praised by Surpanakha said to Dushana, the captain of his army, "Brother! Call those fierce Rakshasas who are invincible in war, and those who revel in cruelly injuring the people, those who always carry out my wishes and those who look like dark clouds. Fetch also my wonderful scimitar, sharp Sakti, and yoke the horses to my chariot. I shall march in the van for the destruction of wicked Ram."

Then at Dushana's directions, horses of different hues were yoked to the chariot, glittering as the sun, and high as the Sumeru peak. Its wheels were made

of gold and its pole was wrought in Vaidurya gem and covered with a net of gold, and ornamental designs of fish, flowers, trees, hills, auspicious birds, of the sun, the moon and the stars in gold decorated the chariot, and in the car at one place arms were kept. Khara in wrath got upon the chariot. Seeing this formidable Rakshasas holding mighty arms and banners surrounded the car. Seeing them Khara said in war-delight, "Don't delay any more. March quick to the field of battle."

Thereupon, fourteen thousand Rakshasas with swords, lances, axes, mallets, Pattish, Shulas, sharp axes, swords, wheels, burning Tomaras, dreadful Parighas, huge bows, maces, clubs, and arms resembling thunderbolts, being thus equipped for war, began to follow after Khara's car. Then with Khara's permission, the charioteer began to drive the car in violent speed. The deep rumbling noise of the car filled the air.

Powerful Khara, dreadful like death, began to urge in a thundering voice, his charioteer to drive fast to kill his enemies in the battle.

At that time, a sable cloud, dark as an ass, began to shower blood upon the Rakshasas with a dreadful noise, as a sign of evil omen. The beautiful horses of Khara began to tumble down on the road that was strewn with flowers. A dark circle with a red rim was seen near the sun. A huge vulture suddenly attacked the royal standard and perched

upon it. Ravenous birds and beasts began to make a clamourous noise and inauspicious jackals proceeded towards the south howling fearfully, thus indicating evil to the Rakshasas.

The sky became overcast with huge black clouds, like elephants emitting intoxicating virus from their temples. Thick darkness enveloped the forest, and nothing could be discerned in that pitch darkness, not even different directions. Suddenly, the evening appeared as if clad in a cloth soaked in blood! Carnivorous beasts and birds began to utter shrill cries even in presence of Khara. The jackals began to howl by gaping wide the red cavity of their mouths, as if belching forth fire towards the Rakshasas. Suddenly, a huge comet was seen approaching the sun and the sun became dim and suffered from eclipse though it was not the time of eclipse. Heavy gales began to blow, and meteors like glowworms fell from the sky during the day time. The lotuses in the tank became withered, fishes and aquatic creatures went underneath the water. The forest was covered with dusts even without a storm and the parrots began to utter piteous cries. The earth and the forest began to shake with a terrific din. Khara was then roaring in his car, but suddenly his left arm began to throb, his eyes became wet, his voice sank and he was siezed with a terrible head-ache! But Khara did not pay any heed to all these through foolishness.

Seeing these ominous portents on all sides, that are sufficient to make one's hairs stand on their ends. Khara addressing his soldiers said with a laugh, "I do not care for all these portents, as the strong do not care for the weak. I shall bring down the stars by my sharp arrows on the ground and shall bring death even to Death himself. To-day I shall not return without slaying haughty Ram and Lakshman in battle. Let my sister, for whose sake their senses were so much perverted, be satisfied by drinking their blood. I have never been defeated in battle and you have witnessed that repeatedly. Now, not to speak of these two puny men, if I be enraged I may slay even Indra, the weilder of the thunderbolt in the field of battle."

Hearing this speech, the doomed soldiers of Khara displayed their great delight. At that time the Gandharvas, Siddhas and the Charanas were stationed in the sky and they said amongst themselves, "Let victory attend the cows, Brahmans and those who are held in esteem by the world. Let Ram conquer these rovers of the night as Vishnu with discus conquered the Asuras in yore."

During the time the celestiais were talking amongst themselves Khara pressed forward with great impetuousity and Shyen-Gami, Prithushyam, Jajna-Satru, Vihangama, Durjaya, Karaviraksha, Parusha, Kalkamuk, Meghmali, Mahamali, Varashya, Rudhirashan—these twelve chiefs went with

him. Mahakapal, Sthulaksha, Pramath and Trishira followed Dushana. As the planets move towards the sun and the moon, so the fierce Rakshasa army rushed towards Ram and Lakshman in lust of battle.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ENGAGEMENT.

When fierce Khara came near the hermitage, seeing all sorts of disturbances and evil portents round him, Ram became sad* thinking of the ill-fate of the Rakshasas and addressing Lakshman said, "Look, Lakshman, all these dark omens presage destruction to the Rakshasas. Dark clouds are raining blood! Wild birds are uttering piteous shrieks. And my shafts are flaming in war-delight and my goldplated bow is throbbing with restless energy. Our Victory is sure and the Rakshasas are doomed. A severe confliet is imminent. My right arm is throbbing repeatedly and your face too appears to be beaming with delight. When the faces of those that are engaged in a battle, grow pallid, it forbodes that their end is near. Hark! the Rakshasas are blowing their trumpets. It is the duty of the sagacious people to take precautions before they are actually faced with any danger. Therefore take shelter with Janaki in

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* To feel for one's enemy rushing unwittingly to the brink of ruin is indeed divine. This is a note-worthy trait in Ram's character—Translator.

some inaccessible crag screened by dense shrubs and creepers being equipped with bow and arrows. I request you to hie there soon. I don't wish that you should act otherwise, you are a hero and I doubt not that you can slay these Rakshasas by your valour, but I wish to kill them myself."

Thereupon, Lakshman taking bow and arrows entered a cave with Sita. Ram satisfied with Lakshman's action put on a flaming armour and thereupon shone like a column of fire in the midst of darkness, and began to resouned the quarter with the twangs of bow and patiently waited for the advent of the Rakshasas.

The celestlals eager to witness the issue of the fight thronged in the sky and prayed for Ram's victory.

By and by the Rakshasa hordes were seen on all sides. Some were shouting, some were talking, some were jumping in anticipation of victory, some were yawning and some were blowing their trumpets. A terrible, deafening noise filled the forest, and wild beasts ran to secluded quarters. Then the vast Rakshasa army, like a sea, made its way for Ram. And Ram too skilled in warfare advanced to meet the host casting careful glances all round. When he met Khara's army, Ram stretched his formidable bow and swiftly took up shafts from the quiver and in his rage he became quite incapable of being looked at like the Doomsdayfire. On all sides stood the

Rakshasas holding bows and other arms in their hands; with their blazing armours and various ornaments and they appeared like mass of blue clouds at sun rise.

Khara in front of his army got sight of Ram near the hermitage. At this he asked his charioteer to drive towards Ram, and the charioteer drove the car where Ram stood alone. Shyena-Gami and others roared at the sight of Khara who then shone like Mars in the midst of a cluster of stars, and then striking broad-chested Ram with hundreds of shafts began to roar in battle with delight. Other Rakshasas in the meantime hurled various weapons at Ram and they began to shower their missles on him, as if a huge cloud was raining over a firm mountainpeak. Then Ram encircled by the Rakshasas looked like God Siva surrounded by the ghost and Spirits in the evening twilight.

Ram began to ward off their blows and weapons. As the mountain is not shaken by a thunder-bolt so Ram was not moved by their striking, but being pierced with arrows his whole body became covered with blood and then he looked like the evening sun surrounded by red clouds.

After this Ram bent his bow into a semicircle and began to discharge arrows at ease and those dreadful shafts effective as Death, shone as tongues of flame in the sky. A number of Rakshasas were slain by them. Heroic Ram by his shafts cut down bows,

shields, armours, flag staffs, and arms of the Rakshasas. Horses, elephants with their riders were struck down by his arrows. The infantry fell in number. As dry wood is consumed by fire so the Rakshasas were scorched and overwhelmed by Ram's arrows. The Rakshasas in fury hurled their lances and axes at Ram, but Ram warded them off the Rakshasas being smitten by Ram's arrows ran to Khara for protection.

Dushan assuaged their fear and advanced to meet Ram with bow in hand. The fight renewed in great fury, and the Rakshasas hurled all their maces, stones and stocks at Ram. At this Ram in anger aimed a flaming Gandharva weapon at the Rakshasas. Innumerable shafts issued from his bow. The sky was covered by his arrows. The Rakshasas were struck with wonder at his quickness. They could not ascertain when he took his shafts from his quiver and when discharged them from his bow. They only witnessed a continual shower of shafts and it infested the sky like the rays of the sun. The ground was covered with the corpses of the Rakshasas. Some were dead, some were on the point of death, some were rolling in agony in the dust and they were rending the sky with terrible yells. The batlle field became strewn with heads decorated with turbans, arms with various ornaments and gloves, with cut down limbs, umbrellas, chowris, flags, chariots, dead horses, elephants and broken arms.

Dushan finding the army scattered by Ram's shafts asked five thousand fierce Rakshasas to charge. They never turned their backs on the field of battle, and their impetuous charge was quite tremendous. At Dushana's command they began to shower their missels on Ram. Ram warded off all their blows and stood there like a bull with half-closed eyes (as if quite unconcerned). The slayer of foes, Dushan began to cut down Ram's arrows. At this Ram grew highly enraged and cut down his bow with a razor-like shaft, four horses with four shafts, and fell down the head of the charioteer with a crescent-shaped arrow and pierced his heart with three arrows. Thereupon Dushan took up a formidable Piragha* it was plated with gold, studded with sharp iron Sankus (pikes) and moistened with the fat of his foes, and with it he rushed towards Ram. At this, Ram with two shafts cut down his two arms with their ornaments and protecting gloves. Instantly the huge Piragha rolled down like a broken flag-staff of the banner of Indra and Dushan himself fell down on earth like an ele-

* We have lost all clues as to the exact nature of the weapons used in former times. All that we know is about the bow and the arrow but that was not all. There are descriptions of arms which correspond to the firearms of our time.—Translator.

phant whose two tusks have been broken down. At this powerful Mahakapal, Sthulaksha, Pattisha and Pramathi rushed towards Ram with their axes. Heroic Ram received those doomed generals with his sharp arrows as one receives at ease his guests. He cut down Mahakapals' head, crushed Pramathi, and Sthulaksha fell down like a lopped off tree. Thus Ram destroyed in no time five thousand soldiers of Dushan.

Hearing this news Khara was greatly enraged and addressing his forces he said, "You see, heroic Dushan has been destroyed with his five thousand soldiers by this wicked man. Now, kill that man with the help of your various weapons."

Khara then rushed forward, and Shyengami, Prithugriva, Jajnasatru, Vihangama, Durjaya, Karaviraksha, Parusha, Kalkamuka, Hemamali, Sarpashya and Rudhirashana—these twelve generals—rushed towards Ram and began to shower their shafts on Ram. Ram then began to destroy their forces with arrows ornamented with diamond and gold. As the trees are destroyed by lightning so his arrows resembling fire with smoke, wrought havoc amongst the Rakshasas. He slew hundreds and thousands of them by the Karnis and the Rakshasas being smitten by his arrows covered the earth with their bleeding bodies. As the Rakshas fell with their dishevelled hair, the battle field appeared to be strewn with the Kusha grass, and the Dandaka

forest for their stream of blood turned into a veritable hell.

Thus Ram on foot and alone destroyed fourteen thousand Rakshasas, and of the Rakshasas there only Khara and Trishira survived.

Khara finding his troops thus destroyed, rushed towards Ram like Indra with his upraised thunderbolt. Thereupon Trishira came near Khara and said, "O, chief of the Rakshasas, I am a formidable warrior, you please refrain from going to the risks of a fight, but send me instead. I shall kill Ram and I swear by my arms that I shall surely slay Ram in battle, capable of being destroyed by the Rakshasas. This day, either Ram will meet with his end at my hand or I shall meet with mine at his. Just refrain for a moment from the fight, and be a witness to it. If Ram is killed you will return to Janasthan with great delight, or if I die, go forward to meet him in battle."

At this Khara said, "Then advance." At his word Trishara instantly got upon a resplendent chariot yoked with horses and rushed forward like a hill with three peaks and after showering arrows on Ram like a raining cloud, he roared in exultation in a voice as deep as that of a wet kettle drum. Ram began to rain his shafts incessantly on Trishira. Then the two fought like a lion and an elephant against each other. Trishira discharged three arrows aiming at Ram's brow. Thereupon Ram grew exceedingly angry and

said, "Ah, is this your might? Your arrows have struck my forehead like shafts of flowers. Now bear my darts."

Saying this Ram in rage pierced Trishira's heart with fourteen snake-like arrows, then with four bent shafts he brought down the four horses and with eight shafts the charioteer of Trishira and cut down his lofty standard by one arrow. Trishira then wanted to get down but Ram with three arrows in extreme rage cut down three * heads of Trishira. And the Rakshasa instantly fell down emitting reeking blood on the field of battle.

Seeing Trishira thus fallen the remnants of the army ran away in fear from the field, just as a flock of deer quickly runs away at the sight of a hunter.

Khara was greatly alarmed at Trishira's death and by the destruction of his troops which Ram effected quite single-handed. He was distressed and seized with great despondency and fear.

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* Hydra-headed monsters were a popular tricks of fancy in the days of yore to strike terror in the minds of the simple people. But even great Dante in his Divine Comedy represents Lucifer with three heads.—Translator.

CHAPTER IX.

DEATH OF KHARA..

Then Khara in great despair rushed towards Ram violently twanging his bow and repeatedly discharging from it Narachas like blood-thirsty, angry snakes, as in the days of yore Namuchi rushed after Indra, or as the Rahu runs after the moon. He repeatedly twung the string of his bow and moved about the field .of battle by displaying his skill in arms. Ram too covered the sky with irresistible arrows glowing as sparks of fire. The shafts of the two heroes cut off the sun's rays. It was a deadly fight, both the heroes tried his utmost to kill his opponent. As the driver strikes the elephant with the goad so Khara struck Ram with Nalikas, Narachas and sharp Vikarnis. Khara was then seated in his chariot, and at that time he looked like Death himself holding the noose in his hand. Ram was then fatigued on account of his fight with Rakshasa hosts, yet Khara considered him to be formidable. And as the lion is never afraid of any deer, so lion-like Ram was not at all frightened at the sight of Khara.

Gradually Khara came near Ram as a moth is drawn by the glare of the flame, and with great lightness of hand cut down the bow of Ram with

the arrow fixed on it, just at the place where it was grasped. Then in great rage he discharged seven arrows like thunderbolt which after severing the joints of Ram's armour struck his person. Thereupon Khara roared in heroic pride.

At this, the armour slipped from Ram's person and in his rage he shone like a burning flame. Ram then took up the formidable Vaishnavi bow producing a deep rumbling noise, given by Agastya, and rushed towards Khara, by fixing shafts with bent knots and golden feathers.

Ram at once cut down Khara's golden standard and it fell into pieces on the ground, as if the sun went down at the will of the Gods. Thereupon Khara in anger smote Ram's chest with four arrows. Thus being wounded Ram in rage discharged six arrows and pierced Khara's head with one shaft, his arms with two and with three crescent-shaped arrows his chest. After this Ram took up thirteen sharp glittering Narachas and cut down the yoke of Khara's chariot, with one shaft, four horses with four shafts, the driver's head with one, and the Trivenu of the chariot with three, and two wheels with two arrows and his bow with one, and easily pierced Khara's body with another. Khara then being deprived of his bow, chariot and horses jumped down from his car with a mace in his hand. Meanwhile the Gods above were greatly eulogising Ram for his valour.

Ram seeing Khara alighted on the ground with mace in his hand said with a gentle but a stern voice,

"Khara! You have done a despicable thing being the leader of a great host with elephants and horses. He who is engaged in cruel and injurious acts towards others can hardly save himself even if he be the lord of the three worlds. Whose acts are against the interests of all, people crush him like a fell snake. As a Brahmin's wife dies who unwisely eats hail-stone,* so the people delight to see the end of him who through greed or lust becomes addicted to vice. What have you gained by killing the pious hermits of the Dandaka forest? He who is hateful, cruel and vicious soon meets with his fall, though rolling in wealth, like an uprooted tree. In fact, as the tree blooms in its season, so vice brings forth its evil consequences in due time. As one can immediately perceive the effect after taking poisonous food, so the evil consequences of sin can readily be perceived. O, Rakshasa! I have come to the forest at the command of the king for the punishment of the vicious. These golden shafts of mine will penetrate your body and enter the earth like snakes. With your army you will follow the pious hermits whom you have killed in the forest. Those hermits in their chariots will witness you despatched to hell. You may now strike me as you like, do what you

* A piece of ancient superstition.

like, I will bring down your head to-day like a palmyra-fruit on the ground."

Hearing these words Khara in red-hot eyes, broke forth with a laugh, "Ram! Why do you boast? Why do you think so high of yourself by slaying the common Rakshasas? Those who are really heroic never boast of their own valour. It is only a vile and a despicable Kshatriya like you that brags of his self. In the thick of fight who advertises about his own heroism by citing his pedigree? In fact, as a piece of brass, glittering like gold, betrays its inherent stain being tested by fire prepared with husks, so you have betrayed your fickleness by your self-eulogy. Ram! Don't you see me standing before you with my mace, like an immoveable mountain peak variegated with minerals? I can destroy you and all others, like Death with this club of mine. I have many things yet to say, but I must refrain as the sun will immediately go down and then there might be some interruption to the fight. You have killed fourteen thousand Rakshasas, I shall wipe the tears of their wives and children by killing you to-day."

Saying this Khara threw his mace like a flaming thunderbolt at Ram. That mace of Khara began to burn trees and creepers into ashes. But Ram instantly cut that mace into pieces and it fell on the ground like a snake deprived of its venom by the power of spell.

Then virtuous Ram said with laugh, "Khara! You have given the utmost proof of your valour. Now, I find how inconsiderable is your might. You were so long bragging in vain. Look! Your mace has been cut into pieces by my shafts. You are a humbug. You thought you would kill your enemy by that, but that belief is gone. You have just now said that you would wipe the tears of the friends and relations of the dead warriors, but that boast will prove to be idle. You are extremely wicked and mean. As the (bird) Garura stole nectar, so I shall rob you of your life. The earth will to-day drink your gore when your head will be severed by my arrows. You will then with lopped off arms and a dusty body embrace the earth like a damsel difficult to win. When you will be buried in eternal sleep the helpless hermits of Janasthan will freely roam about without any fear. This day, the hideous Rakshasis frightful to look at, will run away with tearful eyes in distress, and those low-born women whose husband you are will be overwhelmed with grief. Ah, cruel Wretch! It is through your fear that the ascetics could not perform their sacrifices freely."

Thereupon Khara broke forth in harsh accents:—

"Inspite of real cause of fear you are indifferent. You are a braggart, and though your end is nigh you have no control over your tongue. Those whose days are numbered, on account of their weak

intellect cannot decide what is proper or what is improper."

Saying this Khara pursed his lips and with an angry frown uprooted a Sala tree and then with a deep roar he hurled it against Ram, crying, "Ram thou art doomed." Thereupon, heroic Ram cut down the tree with his shafts and in rage resolved to kill Khara. The corners of his eyes became red with anger and he began to perspire all over the body. He began to discharge his arrows incessantly and foaming blood flowed in torrents from Khara's wounded body. Being greatly smothered by Ram's arrows and rendered furious by the smell of blood Khara rushed towards Ram in fury. Ram seeing Khara thus coming towards him stepped back two or three paces and took up an arrow blazing like fire given by Indra. As the giant Darkness* was reduced into ashes by the angry look of Rudra in the Sweta-forest, as Vritra fell struck by the thunder-bolt, as Namuchi was slain by Phena, or as Vala by thunder, so Khara fell being struck by the arrow.

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* These Vedic stories are bold allegories of some notable astronomical or natural phenomena, as Vritra means a cloud and death of Vritra means clouds riven by the thunder. I have, therefore, taken the liberty of translating Andhaka Asura as giant Darkness. The eternal conflict between darkness and light has found its everlasting expressions in all primitive poetries, though one need not go to the length of referring every incident to the Dawnmyth.

At this, the Gods above were struck with wonder. They showered flowers on Ram and beat their drums of victory in joy and said amongst themselves,

"Look! In what short time Ram has killed Khara and Dushan with fourteen thousand Rakshasas. Wonderful is his valour! What great fortitude he has displayed like Vishnu!" Saying this they went to their respective abodes.

After this, the ascetic saints headed by Agastya came to greet Ram in joy and addressing Ram said, "My boy! This was why Indra came to the sacred hermitage of Sharabhanga and this was the reason for which the hermits brought you here under the plea of seeing the sacred asylums. Henceforth we shall live safely in the Dandaka forest."

After that heroic Lakshman issuing from the mountain fastness with Janaki greeted Ram in great delight. Ram being honoured for his victory entered the hermitage. Then Janaki with moon-like beautiful face saw that all the Rakshasas had been slain and Ram was safe. Her heart was filled with delight and she embraced him again and again.

CHAPTER X.

THE MESSAGE

In that great fight only one Rakshasa named Akampana survived, he hurriedly left Janasthan and appeared before Ravan and delivered the message saying, "O King! The Rakshasas of Janasthan with Khara have been killed. I have alone with extreme difficulty somehow managed to come here."

As soon as Ravan heard this from Akampana's lips he burst forth in red hot eyes, as if scorching everything by the fire of his rage, "Akampan! Who being desirous of death has destroyed Janasthan? Who is to exit from this world? I am death of Death; even Indra, Kuvera, Yama and Vishnu can't be safe by doing any injury to me. In my anger I can destroy Death itself, can burn Fire. I can resist the course of Wind and can reduce the Sun and the Moon into ashes by my energy." Thereupon Akampana with joined hands asked for protection in faltering accents and after receiving his permission and assurance said,

"O King! There is a warrior named Ram, son of Dasarath. He is young, beautiful and of lustrous, green hue. He has might, well-shaped arms, and high and broad shoulders. His valour is quite peerless.

This Ram has killed Khara and Dushan in Janasthan."

At these words Ravan began to breathe heavily like a serpent and asked, "Has Ram come to Janasthan with Indra and other Gods ?"

Akampana replied, "O Lord of the Rakshasas! Ram is foremost of the bowmen and possesses celestial arms. He has got a younger brother named Lakshman. He is too equally powerful. His face is beautiful like the full-moon and his voice is deep like the rumbling of a tambour."

"Ram is united with Lakshman as fire is strengthened by the wind. He is king of kings and know it that none of the Gods have come with him. His shafts, as soon as they are discharged, began to devour the Rakshasas like a five-mouthed serpent, and whither the Rakshas fled in fear they found Ram stationed before them. In truth, this hero alone has ruined your Janasthan."

Ravan replied, "Akampan! I shall immediately start for Janasthan for the destruction of Ram and Lakshman."

Akampana said, "My lord! Listen to me what I have to say about Ram's valour. When that hero is enraged there is none who can resist his prowess in battle. He can turn the course of a flowing river, can bring down the stars and planets from the sky, and raise the submerged earth by his arrows. He can resist the current of the ocean, the course of

wind, can overflood the land by breaking the shores. He can destroy all creatures and create them anew. As it is difficult to attain heaven so it will be difficult for you to defeat him with all the Rakshasas. He is incapable of being slain by the Gods or the Asuras, but I tell you of a device for his destruction, please listen to me with attention. He has got a beautiful wife called Sita. She is in her bloom of youth and gracefully adorned with ornaments. Her beauty strikes every one with deep wonder ; she is indeed a jewel among women. Not to speak of a human being, no Goddess, no nymph, no Gandharvi, no Pannagi is equal to her in beauty. Somehow enchant Ram in the forest and then carry away Sita. It is sure, Ram will not survive the separation of his wife."

Ravan approved of the proposal and after a moment's reflection said, "Akampan ! I shall start even this morning alone taking with me my charioteer only, and return with Sita to the city of Lanka in great triumph."

Saying this Ravan proceeded in a shining car yoked with asses and it shone like the Moon in the sky among a mass of clouds.

CHAPTER XI.

THE GREAT WAR LORD

After crossing a long distance Ravan arrived at the abode of Marich, the son of Taraka.

Maricha himself received Ravan and offered him seat and water to wash his feet, and treated him with rare meats and drinks. He then asked, "O King! Is everything well with the rovers of night? I have great misgivings in my mind seeing you alone coming here in such great haste."

Thereupon Ravan replied, "Ram has slain the indestructible Rakshasas of Janasthan with their leaders. I shall now carry away his wife, just help me in that undertaking."

Hearing these words of Ravan, Maricha said, "O Lord of the Rakshasas! Tell me who is that enemy in the guise of a friend that has mentioned about Sita before you? Perhaps you insulted some body and he has inspired this evil intention in you. Who has advised you to run off with Sita? Who wishes to cut off the head of the Rakshasas? He is no doubt your greatest enemy who has incited you in this matter. He is trying to extract the fangs of a snake by your agency. Tell me who has induced you to this wicked course? You were happy, who has struck

you on the head? Behold, Ram is like an infuriated elephant, his pure ancestry is his trunk, valour is his temporal sweat, two arms are his tusks. Not to speak of challenging him in a fight you can not even stare at him. Ram is like a formidable lion, his movements in the field of battle are his manes and joints.* His duty is to destroy skilful Rakshasa warriors like a flock of deer. Sharp sword is his teeth and arrows constitute his body. It is not proper for you to provoke that sleeping lion. Ram is like an ocean, the bow is its allegator, swing of his arms is its mud, heavy fight its water, shafts are its billows! O King! It is not desirable to face that ocean. Be pacified and go back to Lanka. Live happily with your own wives and let Ram live in peace with Sita in the forest."

At these words of Maricha, Ravan departed for Lanka.

In the meantime Surpanakha seeing the destruction of fourteen thousand fierce Rakshasas with Khara, Dushan and Trishira yelled in grief and being greatly agitated by these tremendous feats of Ram came to Lanka ruled by Ravan.

On arriving there, she saw Ravan effulgent like a column of fire, seated on a golden throne raised

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* Long Virgilian Similes fortunately are not abundant in Sanskrit and here the analogy is not a happy one and it seems to be an interpolation—Translator.

on a golden dias and his counsellors sat in front of him, as the Gods surround the throne of Indra.* The great hero with gaping mouth was dreadful to look at like Death itself. He had ten heads, twenty arms, wide mouth and ample chest. He bore all the royal signs on his person, his hue was like the mild shine of a blue gem (Lapis Lazuli), his teeth were white. He wore gold ear-rings on his ears and was clad in elegant robes. The Gods, Spirits or Saints could not defeat him in battle. He bore on his person the scars left by Indra's thunderbolt and by the discus of Vishnu and of other weapons in the war between the Gods and the Asuras. The marks of striking by the tusks of Airavata were still visible on his breast. He could churn the ocean, uproot mountains, and crush Gods. He was the violator of others' wives, enemy to all sacrifices, and forcibly took away Soma drink

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* It reminds one of the famous lines of Milton :—

"High on a throne of royal state,
Which far outshone the wealth
of Ormus and of Ind * * *
Satan exalted sat, by merit raised
To that bad eminence."

Even if Ravan be a non-Aryan chief, surely he was not a ten-headed monster. Hence many things concerming him should be taken with caution. In fact, Ravan bears great resemblance to Milton's Satan both in strength and in courage.

from the place of sacrifice. This great hero after defeating Vasuki in the city of Bhogavati carried off Takshaka's darling wife. He brought Puspaka chariot defeating Kuvera that could travel to any place at will; in his anger he destroyed the heavenly Nandan garden and Chaitrarath forest and obstructed the course of the sun and the moon in the sky. This victorious hero formerly passed ten thousand years in religious meditation and pleased Brahma by offering his ten heads to him; and on account of the boon received from Brahma he was devoid of any fear of death from the Gandharvas, Pishachas, reptiles, birds and all creatures except man. A celestial garland hung round his neck. He was tall like a mountain, his eyes were large and bright. He was cruel, fierce, harsh, hater of the Vedas and the terror of all creatures.

Surpanakha, stupefied with fear beheld such Ravan, her brother. Then Surpanakha in great anger broke forth before the councillors, "Ravan! You are wilful and intoxicated with lust, you don't know what great danger awaits you. People never honour a king who is greedy and addicted to sensual pleasures, as they do not prize the fire of funeral pyre. The king who does not himself discharge his duties his kingdom is doomed to ruin. Who does not employ envoys and does not present himself in due time to his subjects and who has lost his independence, people shun such a king from

distance, as an elephant avoids mud of the riverbed. The king who is in the hands of his ministers and does not look after his kingdom, prosperity is never noticed in it like a rock submurged in ocean. Ravan! You are fickle, there is not a single spy in any part within your jurisdiction. Then how can you hope to rule in constant hostility to the Gods, and Gandharvas and Danavas. You are foolish like a child and you don't know what is essential to know. How can you then hope to rule? The king, whose spies, treasury and and policy are under another's control he is no better than a common man. The kings who learn about their impending dangers through their spies are reputed to be far-sighted. But you have no spy and your councillors are mediocres; therefore you do not know about the destruction of Janasthan. Single-handed Ram has killed fourteen thousands Rakshashas and Khara and Dushan. He has given protection to the hermits of the Dandaka forests. You do not realise what great peril is impending over the State. This shows you are careless and have no independence. Who is haughty, uncharitable and deceitful, people do not help such a king even in difficulties. The king who is self-conceited and angry he is slighted by all and is destroyed even by his friends and relations in times of peril. No body does his work, nor anybody is afraid of him. That king is soon dethroned and becomes poor like

a man of straw. Some useful purpose may be served even by dry woods, stones, or dusts, but no useful purpose is served by a dethroned monarch. Like a piece of cloth that has been worn or like a trodden garden the king who has been deprived of his suzerainty becomes useless even though competent. But who is careful, virtuous, gratefnl and has subdued senses, nothing concerning the kingdom is unknown to him and there is no possibility of his fall. The king sleeps with his eyes, but is ever awake in his policy and every one can incite his pleasure or anger so he is never slighted anywhere. Ravan! Since you are ignorant of the destruction of the Rakshashas it proves your are most foolish and do not possess all these qualities. You never care for anybody. You do not realise true situation* of anything. You are quite incapable of discerning between virtues and faults. The ruin of your kingdom is therefore inevitable."

Haughty Ravan, the lord of untold riches, hearing of his vices from Surpanakha's lips, was plunged in deep thoughts.

* In the original "you have no idea of time and place."

CHAPTER XII

RAVAN ROUSED.

Thereafter Ravan in great anger asked Surpanakha, "My darling! Who is Ram? What is his prowess? How he looks? Why has he come to the inaccessible Dandaka forest? What is the nature of the weapons with which the Rakshasas were slain and who has disfigured you?"

Thereupon, Surpanakha angrily replied, "Ravan! Ram is beautiful like Cupid, his arms are long, eyes large, and is clad in bark and deer-skin. He discharges Narachas like deadly venomous snakes by bending his bow, furnished with gold rings and that looks like the rainbow—the bow of Indra. He is so quick on the field of battle that no body can discern when he takes up the arrows and when he discharges them or when he bends his bow! As Indra destroys crops by hailstorms so only the destruction of troops is noticed and nothing else. This great warrior alone on foot killed Khara and Dushan with fourteen thousand formidable Rakshasas within three Dandas (an hour or so) and thus has protected the hermits and removed all dangers to the Dandaka forest. He has spared me because it is sinful to kill a woman."

"He has got a brother named Lakshman. He

is powerful, energetic, invincible and victorious like Ram, and he is highly devoted to Ram, as if he is Ram's right hand and his second self. Ram's dear wife lives in their company. She is always engaged in doing good to her husband. Her eyes are drawn up to her ears, face is like the full moon and her hue is like that of polished gold. She is a perfect beauty. Her nose is beautiful, her hair glossy and her nails are well shaped and of reddish tinge, her waist lean, hips heavy, breast high and plump. She looks like the beauty of the forest and as the Goddess of wealth. No Goddess, no Gandharvi, no Kinnari, no Yakshi is like her. In a word, I have not seen such a woman on earth. Whose wife she will be and whom she will embrace cheerfully that fortunate man will be more long-lived than Indra in all the worlds. Ravan! That good woman is worthy of you and you are worthy of her. It is for you that I wanted to carry her away, but cruel Lakshman cut my nose and ears. To speak the truth, you will be agitated by the sight of her beauty. Now step forward for triumphal success. If you approve of what I have said, then throw yourself unhesitatingly into the undertaking. Considering that Ram and Lakshman are quite helpless, proceed to secure Sita. I have narrated everything about the destruction of Khara and Dushan and of the Rakshasas of Janasthan. Do what you think best under the circumstances."

Hearing this stirring tale from Surpanakha Ravan held a deep consultation with his counsellors and after listening to their counsel he secretly entered his stable.

Entering the stable Ravan asked the charioteer to yoke the horses to his car upon which the charioteer soon appeared with an excellent car. It was made of gold and ornamented with jewels. The car was adorned with spectral faces in gold. The chief of the Rakshsas, Ravan, got upon the car and proceeded with a deep rumbling noise like that of a cloud towards the Lord of waters. A white umbrella spread over his head, two white chowris were on his two sides and his body was adorned with ornaments. The great warrior looked quite splendid in beautiful dress. He was the great enemy of the Gods and slayer of the Rishis. He had ten heads, twenty hands and his colour was like that of a blue gem. In his journey he appeared like a hill with ten peaks, or a cloud followed by a flock of cranes.

Gradually Ravan arrived near the sea beach. On arriving there he found a range of hills and specious abodes with lakes and tanks of crystal water. At one place there stood plantain and coconut trees and at an other place stood Tal and Tamalas. Birds and snakes have taken their shelters in these places, and Kinnaras and Gandharvas were freely roving there. Great saints who have

conquered their desires, Charans, Vaikhanasha, Valkhilya, Aja, Masha, and Marichipa were engaged in religious meditation. Sportive nymphs and beautiful damsels of heaven wearing heavenly ornaments and garlands were sauntering in the place. That was the haunt of the Gods feeding on nectar and it was ever cool by the sea-breeze. There was plenty of lapis lazuli stones, and ducks, cranes, and frogs were ever-croaking there. The amber cars decked with garlands of those who had attained heavenly region by their penance were also to be seen. There stood sandal wood—the source of sweet extract Aguru, of excellont perfume, at one place stood Kokkala trees bearing sweet scented fruits, at an other place there were blossoms of Tamala, thickets of black pepper. Dried up heaps of conches, and corals were scattered here and there. There stood gold and silver mountains, somewhere flowed pleasant rills and fountains. There were cities crowded with horses, elephants and chariots and full of grains, wealth and gems of women.

Ravan thus proceeded breathing the pleasant sea-breeze and surveying all these things round him. In his way he found a deep green Banyan tree under whose shade the hermits were absorbed in meditation. Mighty Garura sat on one of its branches with a huge elephant and tortoise for his meal. As soon as he perched upon the branch it gave way

under his weight. Under its shade the saints named Vaikhanasha, Valkhilya, Aja, Marichipa and Dhumra were engaged in religious meditation. Garura out of compassion towards them flew away in great speed holding with one claw the broken bough hundred Yoyanas long, and the elephant and the tortoise in another, and after going a great distance he appeased his hunger by devouring those two huge animals. After that his strength was doubly increased and he became eager to steal nectar. Thereupon, he carried off nectar from well-guarded Indra's palace by breaking off the iron-net. Ravan found that Banyan tree called Subhadra standing on the sea-shore.

Then after crossing the ocean Ravan arrived at a beautiful asylum. There lived Marich on frugal diet, clad in black deer-skin and wearing matted locks.

CHAPTER XIII.

MARICH AGAIN.

Marich received Ravan with due honours and offered him seat and water to wash his feet and after offering him food worthy of Gods, he questioned him with cogent words.

"Is every thing well with Lanka? Why have you come here again?"

Ravan said, "Marich! I am indeed in distress and you are my only help in difficulty. I shall immediately tell you everything that has happened, just listen to me."

"You know Janasthan where my brothers Khara, Dushan and my sister Surpanakha and carnivorous Trishira lived, and other Rakshasas also resided there under my directions. They were fourteen thousand in number and they could perform mighty deeds and were obedient to Khara. They always tyrranised over the virtuous ascetics of the forest. They were engaged in a fight with Ram, and that man—Ram without exchanging any angry word, single-handed killed all those fourteen thousand Rakshasas. He has killed Khara, Dushan and Trishira and rendered the Dandaka forest free from all fears."

"Marich! Who along with his wife has been

angrily banished by his father, that weak and the lowest of the Kshatriyas has destroyed all the Rakshasas. He is vile, crooked and haughty and fearless, greedy and of bad character. He has no religion and does always evil to others. That stupid fellow without any provocation forcibly cut my sister Surpanakha's nose and ears. Now, I intend to carry his wife Sita by force to my abode. Please help me in that undertaking. O, hero! If you be on my side along with brother Kumbhakarna and others I am not afraid of the Gods. You are most competent, come to my assistance. There is none equal to you in might, in resourcefulness or in devising means; you are a warrior and a wizard. Uncle! It is therefore that I have come to you, and first hear what you will have to do for me. Assuming the form of a golden deer with silver spots frisk about in front of Sita. At your sight, Sita will surely induce Ram and Lakshman for securing you. Then, when those two will be out on that mission, I shall easily carry away Sita, as the Rahu steals the moon-shine at ease. Ram will be greatly weakened by the separation of Sita and then I shall succeed in destroying him easily."

Maricha's face grew dark as he heard Ravan's words. He was greatly alarmed by the proposal and being almost half-dead sucked his dry lips and stared at him with winkless eyes. Afterwards

Marich for the good of Ravan as well as for his safety sorrowfully began :

"O king ! There is no dearth of man who will always speak sweet words, but rare is the speaker of unpleasant but wholesome truths, so rare is he who is inclined to listen to it. You are fickle and since you have no spies you donot know Ram looking like Indra and powerful as Varuna. If he does not destroy all the Rakshasas in his anger it will be enough good to us. Sita has been born for your destruction and you will be soon in great trouble on account of her. You are highly wilful and Lanka under your rule will come to ruin. A king who is wicked and wilful like you, soon meets with his end with his kingdom, friends and relations."

"My boy ! Ram has not been cast off by his father and don't consider him as greedy, disreputable, haughty or the meanest of the Kshatriyas. He is virtuous and wishes good to everybody. He has come to the forest for fulfilling the pledge of his father decieved by Kaikeyi. It is for their good that he has come to the Dandaka forest discarding kingdom and Royal luxury. Ravan ! Ram is neither wicked nor stupid, nor under the sway of his senses. Falsehood never attaches to him. So it is not proper for you to talk about him in that vein. He is virtue personified and is devoted to truth. As Indra is the king of Gods so he is king of all. Now,

how do you dare to take away Sita by force from him. Sita is protected by her chastity and devotion. As it is impossible to rob the sun of its light so it is impossible to snatch away Sita from Ram."

"Ravan! Don't rush into fire-like Ram whose sword and bow and arrows are the tongues of flame. Don't go near death-like Ram by casting aside your kingdom, happiness and love of life. There is no limit to the prowess of him to whom belongs Sita. Ram is the protector of Sita and you will never succeed in carrying her off. Sita is dearer to Ram than his life and you will never succeed in subduing that devoted woman untouchable like a flame. What you will gain by your vain efforts? I tell you that as soon as Ram will meet you on the battlefield your end is certain. What shall I say more? Life, happiness and kingdom are three rare things. Consult with your pious counsellors like Bibhisan and others as to the course of action in this matter. Think of the pros and cons of this act, ascertain your own power and the might of Ram, and do what will be ultimately good to you. In my opinion, it is not advisable to fight with Ram. Listen to me, I shall again tell you what is really good for you."

"At one time possessing the strength of thousand elephants, I used to roam over the earth. My body was huge like a mountain, colour blue like that of a cloud, had gold ear-rings on my ears, and a crown

on my head. I used to rove in the Dandaka forest taking a Parigha and thereby striking terror in the minds of the people and I fed upon the flesh of the hermits. At that time, one day, the pious Rishi Visvamitra went to king Dasarath and said that he had been greatly afraid of Marich and asked for Ram's help for the protection of sacrificial rites. Thereupon virtuous Dasarath replied that Ram was only sixteen, that he had as yet not received full training in arms and he wanted to go himself with his vast army for the destruction of the Rakshasas. Visvamitra replied that Dasarath's valour was well-known in the three worlds, that he even protected the Gods in battle, but none but Ram was a fit match for that Rakshasa, and though Ram was a mere boy yet the Rakshasa would not be able to fight with him. So saying he took Ram with him. Ram protected Visvamitra and his sacrifice by stretching his bow in the Dandaka forest. At that time, beards did not grow on his face. He was a beautiful lad, and his colour was soft green. He was then in the state of Brhamhacharyya. He had a single robe, crested raven-locks waved over his head and he wore a gold chain round his neck. Like the newly-risen moon he illumined the whole forest by his resplendent beauty."

"After this, being haughty for the boon received from Brahma I went to the asylum of Visvamitra. Seeing me entering the hermitage with raised arms

ready to strike, Ram without any undue haste or anxiety coolly strung his bow."

"Through my foolishness I despised him as a mere boy and rushed towards the sacrificial altar of Visvamitra. In the meantime Ram discharged an arrow and I fell unconscious into the sea, hundred leagues away! My life was spared because he did not intend to kill me at that time."

"After a long time I regained my consciousness and returned to Lanka. Thus I was saved."

"Though Ram was then young in years and not fully trained in the use of arms but he killed my other associates and followers."

"Now I dissuade you not to commit any hostility towards Ram, or ruin and disaster will surely befall you, and you will bring miseries for nothing upon all the Rakshasas, living in societies and fond of sports and festivities, and Lanka full of golden palaces will be reduced to ruins for this."

"Even the virtuous who commit no sin are ruined in company of the vicious, as the fishes perish in a poisonous pool inhabited by snakes. After this, for your own fault you will witness the destruction of the Rakshasas clad in bright dress adorned with celestial ornaments and their bodies perfumed with sandal, and then the remnants of your train will run away in different directions for shelter, some alone, some with his wife and you will find Lanka besieged, in flames, and reduced to ashes."

"O, king! There is not a greater sin than to carry away another's wife. You have thousands of ladies in your seraglio, be content with them and thereby save the Rakshasa race. If you want to enjoy your kingdom, wealth, coveted life, friends, beautiful wives and honour for a long time, then never act against Ram. I am your friend and I dissuade you repeatedly not to do this. If you slight my words and insult Sita by force then you will, surely, with your friends and relations, meet death, vanquished by the shafts of heroic Ram."

"O king, I was somehow saved at the time of Visvamitra's sacrifice, but just listen what has occurred quite recently. Without being humbled, even at the risk to my life, I again entered the Dandaka forest with two Rakshasas in the form of deer. My tongue was like that of fire, teeth large, and horns sharp. Assuming that formidable form of a deer I used to roam about fearlessly in the Dandaka forest and began to feed upon the flesh and blood of the hermits and thereby putting an end to all religious practices. Wild animals of the forest were frightened at my sight."

"In the course of my ravages I saw pious Ram living on spare diet, and also saw honourable Sita and mighty Lakshman. At the sight of Ram the memory of old enemity revived and I at once rushed for his destruction in great rage. By that time Ram

discharged three arrows at me. They came flying with the velocity of the wind like flaming thunderbolts. At that I stepped aside at a little distance, but the other two Rakshasas were immediately killed; thus being saved from Ram's arrows I have been leading the life of an anchorite. To speak the truth, under the shadow of every tree, I find Ram clad in bark standing like Death with the noose* in his hand. And through my fear I always see thousands of Ram before me as if the whole forest is pervaded by Ram's presence. I start even in my dreams at his sight. I see Ram where there is nothing, and startle at names beginning with R, such as Ratna† and Ratha‡. In fact, Ram's prowess is not unknown to me and it not possible for you to fight against him. If he desires, he can kill even Vali and Namucha. Whether you fight against him or not, but if you want to see me alive don't talk about him in my presence. Many pious men with their families on this earth have met with their destruction for another's misdeeds. The same case may be with me. "O, Lord of the Rakshasas! Do what you can, but I shall not follow you.,,

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* It is said that at the time of death, Yama casts the thread of destiny like a noose round the dying man's neck and drags out the reluctant real being, encased in astral body, from this mortal abode of flesh, probably hence Death is represented holding a noose in his hand.

* Jewels, ‡Chariot.

"Ram is exceedingly mighty and intelligent ; he will surely destroy the race of the Rakshasas. Very good, just tell me what great wrong Ram has committed by killing Khara in battle who challenged him in fight for Surpanakha ? O king, I am your well-wisher and dear friend, if you don't pay heed to my words then you will be destroyed with your dear and near ones even to-day."

CHAPTER XIV.

RAVAN'S REPLY.

As one desirous of death does not take any medicine, so Ravana, whose end was nigh, did not agree to these reasonable words of Maricha, but harshly replied, "Ah, low-born wretch! You have advised me what is highly improper. But your words will prove futile like seeds fallen on a barren soil."

"You will never succeed in this way to dissuade me from my hostilities towards that foolish and despicable human being who could renounce his parents, friends, kingdom and every thing at the bidding of a woman. I shall carry away in your presence his darling wife, Sita. This is my resolve and not even Indra with host of Gods will succeed in dissuading me. You could have spoken like this, if I had doubts in any matter and had I asked for your advice as to its propriety and impropriety, or for its ways and means. A counsellor, who is wise and wishes well when questioned about anything, should reply humbly with joined hands before his master and should point out what is good or favourable to his master, as sanctioned by polity. The king who is particular about his dignity rejects even well-meaning words if they

are in any way insulting or contradict his opinion. A king assumes the spirit* of the five Gods ;—Agni, Indra, Chandra, Yama and Varuna.

For this haughtiness, might, kindness, repression and contentment are found in him. So you should honour the king on all occasions. Marich ! I am your guest, but being ignorant of court manners and through your stupidity you have used harsh expressions towards me. I never asked for your opinion about the merits and demerits of my contemplated act ; I only asked for your help, so it is highly unbecoming to talk in this vein. However, you will have to help me in my undertaking and now listen to me what you will have to do. You will assume the form of a golden deer flecked with silver drops and stray about in the sight of Sita in Ram's hermitage. Sita will be struck with wonder at your sight and

* In the original the word Rupa means forms but here it means the spirit or element each of the Gods produces in particular. Agni (Fire) producing haughtiness, Indra (Jupiter) prowess, Chandra (moon, not cynthia, for moon is male in Sanskrit) generosity, no doubt a gentle quality, Yama (Pluto or death) power of repression or punishment and Varun (Neptune, in Sanskrit he is also the presiding deity of wine hence) producing contentment or cheerfulness, merriment is a proverbial accompaniment of drink as in Bacchus in Greek mythology.

will request Ram to capture you without delay. When Ram will follow you for that purpose, decoy him to a great distance and then cry in Ram's voice "Alas, Sita ! Alas Lakshman !" Hearing that, Lakshman at the importunities of Sita and out of his deep brotherly love will proceed towards the direction of Ram. When both of them will thus leave the hermitage I shall carry off Sits Indra brought Sachi. Marich ! I offer you the half of my kingdom, do this and then go wherever you like. Now come, I shall follow you in my car to the Dandaka forest and thus deluding Ram I shall return with you to Lanka after procuring Sita."

"But if you don't comply with my request I shall kill you even this day, so you will have to do it for fear of death. He never reaps any reputation who acts against his sovereign. What shall I say more. ? If you act against me, surely your life will be in peril ; knowing this to be certain do what you think best."

Being thus commanded by Ravan, Marich boldly replied in angry words, "O chief of the Rakshasas ! Who is that wicked that has advised you to rush to your ruin with your children, counsellors and kingdom ? Who is that vile person who has been unhappy at the sight of your happiness ? What foolish person has pointed to you the gate of death under the pretext of indicating you the means ? Which mean fellow has instigated you to be ready for

such an act? He wishes to encompass your ruin by your acts. Your enemies are comparatively weak and they wish to see your destruction by a formidable foe. O King! The counsellors who do not restrain you finding you deviating from the right course deserve death, then why do you not yourself put them to death? When a self-willed king treads upon a wrong path, honest counsellors restrain him but I find it to be otherwise in your case. Kings can acquire virtue, wealth, fame and objects of desire even residing in palaces, but when the king goes wrong destruction visits the people. In fact, king is the fountain head of righteousness and honour, he should therefore be warned at every step. That king's kingdom comes to ruin who is unruly and haughty, as a car is dashed to pieces by a wreckless driver. The subjects of an irritable king who acts against the welfare of the people become imperilled like a flock of deer protected by a wolf. I shall not be least sorry if I lose my life even now in the hands of Ram, but I am really sorry to think that you will be soon destroyed with your army. That hero will soon kill you after slaying me. I shall consider myself rather fortunate in meeting death at his hand. Know it for certain that I shall die as soon as I meet him, and you will also meet death with your near and dear ones after carrying away Sita. If you succeed with me in carrying off Sita, Lanka will surely be reduced to ruins. Ravan! I am your well-

wisher and friend and I ask you repeatedly to refrain, but you cannot brook my words. When Death marks one as his own, to him the words of a friend become unbearable no doubt."

CHAPTER XV.

THE TRANSFORMATION.

Marich again spoke to Ravan, the ruler of Lanka, with a sorrowful heart, "Ravan ! Let us now depart from the place. If Ram sees me again with bow in his hand I shall surely be killed. None will be able to rescue me alive by his prowess from his hands. You will also be killed. Ram is like Destruction to you. You are unrighteous, what can I do for you ? May you be happy ! Let me now take my leave."

Ravan was delighted at Maricha's words and after embracing him warmly said, "Uncle ! You have now bravely expressed yourself to fulfil my desire. Now I recognise you to be real Marich, so long you seemed to be a different person. Now get upon my jewelled car, that courses through the sky and is yoked with asses. After alluring Sita go where-ever you like, and in opportune moment I shall carry her off by force."

Then Ravan and Marich got upon the heavenly car and soon arrived at the Dandaka forest seeing various towns, villages, forests, streams and hills on their way. Ravan then lighted from his car and clasping Maricha's hand said, "Uncle ! there

stands Ram's asylum surrounded by the plantain trees. Now expedite the thing for which we have come."

Thereupon, Marich in an instant assumed the form of an enchanting deer. Its horns were glistening like the finest jewels! Its ears like lotus-petals were made of blue gems and its mouth, as if, was made of red and blue lotuses! Its arch neck was little raised, its belly was made of sapphire, its flanks were pink like Madhuka flowers and its colour was like the tint of a red lotus, soft and lovely. Its hoofs were made of dark blue stones! It was of lean thighs and firm joints. Its body was flecked with silver dots and sparkled with the sheen of diverse metals and its little upraised tail shone like a rainbow! The green forest and the cottage of Ram was lit up by its wonderful beauty.

Then the deer in order to tempt Sita began to stray about hither and thither, sometimes browsing on creepers and leaves and then entered the plantain grove. Afterwards to attract Sita's notice it began to move about slowly through the Karnika woods. Sometimes it galloped, sometimes it slowed its motion, sometimes it returned to its former place in wild sports, sometimes it squatted upon the ground sometimes it approached Ram's cottage behind a flock of deer and again returned to its former place following another herd. Thus it skipped about hither and thither. Other deer of the forest came near it at its

sight but no sooner they came they ran away at the smell of his body.

Marich was most fond of venisons, but somehow he restrained his appetite for this disguise.

In the meantime, while Janaki, whose glance intoxicates like wine, was busy in gathering flowers and was straying about through the Karnika, Asoka and Mango groves she beheld this golden deer bedecked with gems.

She fondly gazed upon the wonderful deer with eyes expanded with admiration and surprise. The deer, too, saw the darling of Ram and skipped about to and fro, illuminating the whole forest by the splendour of its beauty.

CHAPTER XVI

THE DELUSION.

Seeing that wonderful deer, Sita, of gold-like resplendent hue, called aloud in great delight, "O Lord! Soon come hither taking Lakshman with you." Again and again she gazed upon the deer in delight and again and again she called aloud her husband.

Being thus summoned by Sita, Ram hied to her side taking Lakshman in his company and espied the deer.

Then Lakshman expressing his suspicions said, "Arya, meseems Marich has assumed this form of a deer. Previously in the guise of a stag, he destroyed many princes who came for hunting in this forest. Marich is a great sorcerer and he has assumed the form of this beautiful deer by magic. It is impossible for such a jewelled deer to exist on earth. It is surely a dark incantation, there is no doubt about it."

But Janaki, under the influence of a spell, interruping Lakshman's speech broke forth with a cheerful smile, "My lord! That beautiful deer has captivated my mind, please capture it. We shall sport with it. Many a Chamara, Srimara, Rik, monkeys and Kinnaras visit our hermitage, they are lovely no doubt, but

none is half so beautiful, resplendent and quiet. I have never seen any thing like it. This golden deer, variegated in colours and beautiful like the moon, stands before me as the light of the forest. O, how beautiful! How lovely! O, what a voice! This wonderous deer is drawing my mind. It will indeed be a wonderful feat if you can capture it alive. After the period of our exile when we shall regain our kingdom this deer will be an ornament and beauty of our seraglio. To Bharat, mothers-in-law and all of us it will always be an object of wonder. If the deer can not be secured alive its beautiful skin will be of great use to us. I shall spread this golden skin over the grass and shall seat upon it. It is improper for a woman to command her husband for her own interest, but to speak the truth, I have become greatly enamoured of that animal."

Hearing these words of Janaki, Ram cast his glance upon the deer with golden skin and sapphire-like horns with diamond tips, beautiful as the first blush of dawn or the milky way* and in deep amazement said, "Look, how eager is Sita for that deer. This deer will lose its life to-day for its superb beauty at my hand. Not to speak of this earth there is not one like it in the Chaitrarath forest. How its golden

* In the original—'like the orbit of the stars' but as it fails to convey the idea of beautiful or luminous so I have taken the liberty of rendering it as the milky way.

down is evenly arranged downwards and upwards! How red and flaming is its tongue that shines like a drinking cup of sapphire, and its flanks are bright like conch and pearl! Who is not attracted by the sight of this beautiful deer? Princes either for sport or for meat kill deer, and in the course of their hunting they even collect many gems and precious metals. These riches obtained from the wild that fill their coffers are no doubt better than obtained from other sources, like objects of enjoyment obtained with the very desire of those inhabiting the heaven. Political economists define that to be wealth which people, desirous of wealth, pursue with a fixed determination. Now Janaki is desirous of sitting with me on this fine golden skin. Perhaps the skin of Kadali, Priaki, Pribeni, or of goat is not equal to it. My boy! You consider it to be a Rakshasi magic, then surely it deserves to be killed. Formerly, this cruel Marich killed many princes and ascetics. Vatapi was digested by Agastya. Since this wicked Marich wants to overcome me he will be killed like Vatapi. Now put on your armour and protect Sita carefully. It is our duty to protect her. If this stag be Marich I shall surely kill him or if it be a real deer I shall return with it. Look how eager Sita has become for that deer-skin. So long I do not kill it remain in cottage with Sita. I shall soon return with its skin. Lakshman! Powerful Jatayau is intelligent and expert, protect Sita with vigilance with his help."

Warlike Ram having said this to Lakṣhman carried a sword with gold hilt and equipped himself with a bow bent at three places, and with two quivers.

The deer seeing Ram thus set out concealed itself in fear and then appeared again. Ram in quick paces proceeded towards the deer, and he saw everything illumined before him by the halo of its beauty !

At that time, the deer was alternately casting glance upon Ram and then darted away from him. At times it went outside the range of the arrow and at times it came within the reach of his hand. Thus it tempted Ram. Gradually fear of death agitated its mind and made it restless and it began to run fast, as if bounding through the air. Thus at one moment it became invisible, but the next moment it showed itself at distance. Thus the deer appeared like the moon peeping through scattered clouds and thus it gradually drew away Ram to a great distance from the cottage.

Thereupon, Ram, desirous of securing the deer, was at the same time much provoked and tempted. Thus being fatigued in the chase, Ram sat on a green turf under the shade. During that time the stag appeared at distance along with other deer. Ram again ran to capture it. At this the deer was greatly alarmed and disappeared at once and again appeared at distance behind the screen of a

tree. Thereupon Ram resolved to kill the deer and discharged from his bow a sharp arrow glittering like the sun's ray. That deadly shaft like a flaming snake struck the heart of Marich. At that blow, he bounding high like a palmyra tree raised a terrible yell. His life was about to ebb and in his last moments he cast off his assumed form of a deer. He then remembered Ravan's words and thought of the means that might induce Sita to send off Lakshman from her side, so that Ravan might carry her off in secrecy. He then considered Ravan's plan to be the best, and he cried in the voice of Ram, "Alas Sita! Alas Lakshman!"

His counterfeit form of a deer was gone and he assumed the hedious form of a huge Rakshasa.

Ram finding the Rakshasa bathed in blood and rolling in the dust remembered Lakshman's words that it was Rakshasi magic. It was no doubt true, he thought, but he had killed Marich. "But at the time of death the Rakshasa gave up his ghost crying 'Alas Sita! Alas Lakshman!' Heaven knows what will Janaki do hearing that sound, and what will happen to Lakshman!" He started at this thought. He was greatly alarmed at this thought and became deeply sad.

He then killed another deer and swiftly returned to the cottage with its meat.

CHAPTER XVII.

SITA'S ANXIETY.

Here Janaki hearing a cry coming from the forest in the voice of Ram said to Lakshman, "Lakshman! Go and ascertain what untoward thing has happened to my lord. He is crying in distress. I have distinctly heard his voice. I have become restless with anxiety. Go and protect him. He is asking for protection being in the grip of the Rakshasas formidable as lions. Run to him quickly."

But Lakshman thinking of Ram's directions was quite reluctant to go. At this, Janaki was beside herself with rage and said, "You are not going to Ram's help even under these circumstances! You are his enemy in the guise of a friend. You wish for his death in order to secure me. *

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* Sita was no doubt mad with anxiety, and there was every justification for her fears for Ram, yet such a base insinuation against a brother like Lakshman who had renounced his happiness and future and followed Ram like a devoted servant is at least unworthy of Sita, if not anything else. Dramatic necessity for this tragic fate was indeed imperative and the poet found it hard to make Lakshman disobey Ram's injunctions unless there were such cruel imputations which sets Sita's anxiety for Ram

It is clear to me that just for your lust for me you have refrained from going to your brother. You have not the least love for your brother therefore you pray for his disaster. This is why you are so calm in his absence. Ostensibly following whom you have come to this forest if he dies I see no necessity for keeping my life."

When Janaki like a frightened deer said all these in a distressed mind, Lakshman replied, "O worshipful lady ! Even the Gods, the Giants, the Gandharvas, the Rakshasas and the Sarpas can not defeat your husband. I donot find any body in the three worlds a fit match for Ram. He is invincible, so it does not behove thee to utter such words. Ram is not present, and it is not proper to leave you alone in the forest. Even the strongest cannot withstand his prowess. If all the people of the three worlds

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and Lakshman's sense of honour in juxtaposition. But the great Bengali poet Madhusudan Dutt has done the thing most artistically. There Sita condemns Lakshman as a coward and rushes herself to the rescue of Ram, this cuts the young hero to the quick and he leave Sita in agony to her fate. Sita, the greatest ideal of Indian womanhood, is justly revered as a goddess, but her humanity is quite apparent. Valmiki paints both his hero and heroine in the light of humanity, though hedged with divinity, and not as a pure God or a Goddess. —Translator.

be united with Indra and other Gods, they will be defeated by the valour of Ram. Be comforted and banish your sorrow. Ram will soon return after slaying that golden deer. What you have heard is not his cry, nor any supernatural voice. It is the magic of that wicked Marich. Noble Ram has left you under my care, therefore I do not dare to leave you alone. You see we have incurred hostility of the Rakshasas by the destruction of Janasthan and for the death of Khara. Those malicious devils in order to delude us talk like this in the forest. Therefore don't at all be anxious for him."

Janaki then harshly replied with her eyes red in anger, "Ah cruel wretch, the defiler of your line! Shame on your digraceful conduct, you are speaking thus because you desire Ram's disaster and there is nothing to be wondered at this, you are hypocrite, wicked and an enemy to your kith and kin. You wicked villain! It is either at the instigation of Bharat, or at your own initiative you are deceitfully following Ram just for me. But your desire will never be fulfilled. How can I desire for another having enjoyed the company of lotus-eyed Ram of sweet complexion like that of a blue lotus? I shall give up my life even in your presence. I shall not live even for a moment without Ram."

Hearing these horrible words of Janaki, gentle Lakshman said with joined hands, "Worshipful lady! You are a Goddess to me, I dare not reply to your

words. It is not at all strange for a woman to use unjust and improper words, it is rather the nature of a woman, and it is everywhere to be found. They are fickle, irreligious and crooked, and they bring about family dissensions. At any rate, I can no more bear your harsh words. They are torturing my ears like burning shafts piercing through them. The sylvan Gods are my witnesses. I was behaving properly towards you, but you have abused me in extreme. Shame upon you, since you suspect me of such a base thing. It seems your ruin is nigh. I was simply obeying the mandate of the eldest brother, but you have accused me on account of your womanly nature. May good betide you, I am going where Ram is. I have great misgivings in my mind on account of the dire situation that has arisen. May the deities of the forest protect you! May I find you here returning with Ram."

Then Janaki replied in tearful eyes, "In absence of Ram I shall either enter into fire, or into the waters of the Godavari, or I shall put an end to myself either by hanging, or by drinking virulent poison, or I shall throw myself from a great height. But I shall not touch any other person but Ram." Saying this Janaki began to weep and strike her breast* repeatedly. Thereupon, Lakshman

* In the original it is belley.

was greatly distressed and tried to console Sita. Janaki remained silent. Lakshman then bowed to her with joined hands and looking repeatedly at her, proceeded towards Ram with an irritated mind.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE MENDICANT.

In the meantime, Ravan assuming the guise of a mendicant, wore a piece of silken cloth, bore a tuft of lock on his head, from his left shoulder slung a staff and a water-pot, he held an umbrella in his hand and his feet were shod in sandals. Wearing this guise of a Bhikshu he drew near Sita in absence of Ram and Lakshman, as darkness approaches the evening in absence of the sun and the moon, or as the baleful planet, Ketu, draws near the Rohini star in absence of the Moon. Thus wicked Ravan saw Sita seated in the cottage. Seeing him gazing at her with flashing eyes, the wind ceased to blow and the trees of Janasthan stood motionless, even the swift Godavari stopped her impetuous course in fear!

Then Ravan in the false guise of a mendicant, like a (treacherous) well hidden in the grass, came near Sita as the (evil) Saturn draws near the lovely planet, Chitra, and he stood mute casting his glance on her.

Bathed in tears and with a distressed heart, Sita was waiting in the cottage lamenting for her husband, yet her face was beautiful like the full

moon, her lips red like the Bimba fruit, her teeth lustrous and her eyes expanded like the petal of a lotus. She was dressed in yellow silk and was illumined by the halo of her beauty.

Ravan was at once smitten with lust, and citing the Vedas he began to praise her greatly, and thus he began with an humble air, "Ah, My beauty of golden hue! By wearing a lotus wreath you look like the lotus itself! Perhaps you are Modesty's self, or Beauty, or Honour, or Fortune, or a Nymph, or Rati ranging at will. Your teeth are even, glossy and pointed like Jasmine buds. Your eyes are crystal-clear whose ends are tinged with red and adorned with deep black pupils. Your hips are heavy anp plump thighs are round like the trunk of an elephant, your breast high and plump is like two closely placed palms, with their thick and pointed teats and adorned with jewels, seem to be ever waiting for an embrace.* O, my beauty of winning smile, as the current of the river carries off its bank so you have stolen my mind. Your waist so slim! Hair so dark! To tell the truth, no Goddess, no Gandhavi, no Yakshi, no Kinnari is like thee. In short, I have never seen a damsel like you on earth. Such superb beauty, such exquisite grace, this prime of youth and this living in seclusion has made me quite

* This is profane but exactly suits with Ravan's mentality.—Translator.

anxious on thy account. Leave this forest, it is not at all meet for you to live in this place. It is the haunt of fierce Rakshasas who can assume different forms at will. A prosperous city, a beautiful palace, and a romantic garden are only fit abode for thee. Ah, my beauty! The garland on your neck, the sweet smell of your body, your apparel and even your husband seem to be the very best! Are you in any way related to the Maruts, Rudras or the Vasus? That you are a Goddess is palpable. This forest is not visited by the Gandharvas or the Kinnars, it is the abode of the Rakshasas, then how could you come here? Here lions, tigers, bears, hyenas, monkeys and herons roam about freely. Do you not fear them? Are you not afraid of wild infuriated elephants? Now tell me who art thou? To whom do you belong? Whence and where for have you come to this dreadful Dandaka forest visited by the Rakshasas?"

Then Janaka's daughter seeing Ravan, in the guise of a Brahman, received him with due rites of hospitality and offered him seat and water to wash his feet, and said, "Meal is ready."

At that time, she could not neglect Ravan seeing his grave appearance and clad in red and carrying a Kamundula. In fact, from various signs she considered him to be a Brahman and invited him as a Brahman ought to be. "Vipra! Take your seat here, accept this water for washing your feet. This

woodland meal has been cooked for you. Enjoy it freely."

Ravan for his destruction thought of carrying away Sita by force. Sita was then waiting for Ram and Lakshman. She stretched her eyes for their sight, but she saw only vast, extended green forest on all sides.

CHAPTER XIX.

THROWING OFF THE MASK.

Then Ravan dressed as a mendicant asked her introduction. Janaki thought, "He is my guest and a Brahman, if I don't speak out everything he may curse me now."

She said, "I am the daughter of Janak, king of Mithila. I have been married to Ram and my name is Sita. After marriage I passed twelve years happily in my father-in-law's house. On the thirteenth year, the king consulting with his ministers thought of installing Ram on the throne. Everything was ready for the coronation ceremony, but warshipful Kaikeyi begged of her truthful husband two boons, one for the installation of Bharat and the other for the exile of Ram, and that she would give up her life by abstaining from food if Ram was installed to the throne. King Dasarath tried to dissuade her by promising immense riches, but she did not agree. Ram was then twenty five and my age was eighteen. Truthful and gentle Ram went to his father for the installation ceremony but Kaikeyi harshly said that the king had ordered for Bharat's installation and Ram's exile for fourteen years. "Ram! Go to the forest," said, she "and keep the pledge of your father."

Ram readily agreed to her proposal, and acted accordingly. Ram will give but won't take anything in return, he will speak the truth and never falsehood. Thus he leads his life. Heroic Lakshman is his step-brother. He has followed us with bow in his hand and observes an ascetic vow. He is a great help to Ram in battle. Ram has entered the Dandaka forest like a hermit. We have thus been deprived of our kingdom by Kaikeyi. Take a little rest, you will surely be allowed to live here. My husband will soon return with venisons by killing different animals. Now Vipra ! Tell me your name, your clan and why you are travelling alone in the Dandaka forest ?"

Thus being questioned by Sita, Ravan began in dreadful words, "Janaki ! I am Ravan, the lord of the Rakshasas, whose prowess is dreaded by men and Gods. Seeing you clad in silk and of golden hue I can no more be happy with my wives. I have secured a number of beautiful women from different places, thou dost become the foremost queen of them. I possess a great city called Lanka surrounded by the ocean and resting on hills. If you be my wife then you will saunter about in the garden of Lanka with me. Five thousand well-dressed women will wait upon you as maids of honour. Then you will no more like to reside in the forest."

At this, Sita was highly enraged and slighting him said, "I shall ever follow Ram who is steady as

the Himalayas and deep as the ocean. Like the Banyan tree he is the shelter of all. He is honourable, truthful and auspicious. I shall go to him who is mighty as lion and the foremost of men. Being a jackal do you aspire after a lioness ?"

"As one cannot touch the rays of the sun so you won't be able to touch me. Ah, you low-born wretch ! Since you wish for the darling of Ram you no doubt see before you hundreds of golden trees.* You want to pluck the teeth of a hungry lion or the fangs of an angry snake. You want to retire in safety by drinking virulent poison, or holding the Mandara hills with two hands. You might as well wish to brush your eyes with needles, or may lick a sharp razor with your tongue. You might as well try to swim the ocean tying a weight round your neck, to pluck the sun and the moon, to bind burning flame with a piece of cloth, or to walk freely over iron pikes. The difference between Ram and you is as great as between a lion and a jackal, between a streamlet and the ocean, between nectar and gruel, between gold and iron, between sandal paste and mud, between an eagle† and a crow, between a peacock and a common water-fowl,‡ between a vulture and a swan. If you carry me away when

* A premonition of death.

† In the original the words are Gurara.

‡ Madgie, an aquatic bird.

this mighty bowman Ram is alive you will surely be destroyed, as a fly that sucks on clarified butter."

Saying this gentle Sita began to shake like a plantain tree.

Then death-like Ravan frowned in anger and putting Sita to fright said, "Janaki! I am the step-brother of Kuvera, Ravan, of formidable might. As people fear death, so the Gods, Gandharvas, Pishachas, Sarpas and birds are afraid of me. Once I fought a duel with Kuvera and defeated him by my prowess. Since then he has left Lanka and is residing in the Kailash mountains. I have captured by force his Puspaka chariot that can go wherever it wills. I now journey through the sky in that chariot. Even Indra and other Gods fly at the very sight of my angry face. Where I happen to be there the wind blows gently in fear, the sun assumes a mild look, the leaves of the trees cease to flutter and the rivers cease to flow. Across the ocean there is my capital Lanka like Amaravati—the heavenly city. It is inhabited by formidable Rakshasas and is surrounded by a white wall. The city gates are made of lapis lazuli gems, and its rooms are made of gold. It abounds in horses, elephants and chariots and flourish of trumpets are constantly heard. Its gardens are picturesque and contains a large number of trees of coveted fruits. Sita, if you live with me in Lanka, you will not long for

human companions and after enjoying heavenly and rare luxury you will never think of Ram—a human being with a brief span of life. You see, king Dasarath having banished his weak son has installed his dear one to the throne. Now what will you do with that stupid vagabond deprived of his kingdom? I am the lord of the Rakshasas, I have come to you personally, please receive me. I have been smitten with love, please save me. You must not refuse me. As Urvashi repented for kicking at Pururava so you will have to rue for disappointing me. Janaki! Ram can not stand even the force of a single finger in battle. By your good luck I have come to you, so yield to me."

Hearing this Sita boldly replied with her eyes flashing in anger, "Claiming Kuvera as your brother who is adored by all Gods how could you engage yourself in such a nefarious act? You are a sensuous brute, and they whose ruler are you, will meet with their destruction. It is even possible to live for sometime after carrying off the pearless beauty, Sachi, the queen of Indra, but it is impossible to live in safety by carrying off Ram's wife. Even if you be immortal by drinking nectar you won't be saved."

CHAPTER XX.

ABDUCTION OF SITA.

Then powerful Ravan pressed his palms in anger and assumed his own form and addressing Sita, said, "My beauty! Yov are mad, perhaps you have not heard about my prowess. I can bear the earth on my hands, can drink ocean, kill Death in battle and pierce the sun and the nether world with my sharp arrows. You are proud of your beauty and youth, now cast your glance at me who can assume any form at will."

As he spoke these his blue, fiery eyes became red with anger. He at once cast off the gentle mask of a mendicant and assumed his own fierce form, terrible as death. For sometime he stood angrily staring at Sita adorned with a head of black hair and who was resplendent as sunlight, said, "My noble lady! If you desire for a husband famous in the three worlds then accept me. I am worthy of you in every respect. It will be a great honour to you if you serve me all your life. I shall never do you any harm. Leave aside your attachment for Ram and be devoted to me. Ah, foolish girl, seeming wise, how could you be attached to that stupid Ram with a brief span of life who at the words of a woman has come to this fearful forest in exile, leaving behind his kingdom. friends and relations?"

Thus spoke wicked and lustful Ravan. As the planet Budha attacks the star Rohini so he pounced upon Sita of sweet speech. With his left hand he held her hair and with his right hand he clasped her thighs. The sylvan deities ran away in fear at the sight of Ravan huge as a mountain.

Then came in instantly the magic car drawn by asses with a deep rumbling noise. Ravan got upon the chariot with Sita in his embrace. Sita then in extreme distress called aloud for distant Ram and writhed like a snake to get out of Ravan's hand. But Ravan infuriated with lust soared with her in the sky.*

Then Sita, crazed with grief and remorse, began to cry, "Ah, respectful Lakshman, always obedient to the superiors! Dost thou not see that sorcerer Rakshasa

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*" Surely this picture of the exiled queen standing amidst the long shadows in her simple hut, lost in the struggle between her desire to aid and all the invisible safeguards of her womanhood is one that deserves the brush of some great painter." Writes Sister Nivedita (Miss Margaret, E. Noble) in her 'Web of Indian Life.' Our readers will no doubt generously forgive us for our imperfect execution of this noble theme in colour. The translator does not hold any brief for his artist, who follows the rules of his own techinque and relies for his information upon the old metrical composition of Kritivash who like Tulsidas drew largely upon his own imagination. The genius of each of those two great regional poets has given a new colour to the epic of Valmiki

is carrying me away? Alack, Ram! Thou hast renounced thy happiness and wealth for virtue, dost thou not see that Rakshasa is carrying me off by force? O hero, you always chastise the wicked; why dost thou not teach this villain a lesson? Evil acts do not always bear their fruits in a moment's time, but slowly, like the ripening of the grain, bring forth by degress their harvest of woes. You have done this for your own ruin, Alas! the chaste wife of righteous Ram is thus being carried away! Now Kaikeyi's desire will be fulfilled."

"I invoke you, o Janasthan, and the blooming Karnikars to inform Ram without delay that Ravan has stolen away Sita. I ask you, O Godavari, resonant with the cries of swans and ducks, inform Ram without delay that Ravan has carried off Sita. I invoke you all animals and creatures of the forest to tell Ram that Ravan has carried off his darling wife. Even if I am carried away by Death from this world, Ram will surely recover me by his prowess."

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in Bengali and Hindi Vernaculars. This is why the pictures may not always be strictly faithful to the original. Current and popular notions always override those of books (as in page 395) Personally speaking I am against inserting any picture (unless it be a masterpiece) and thereby limiting the imagination of the readers which might often create its own image of a thing or situation better than one in print.—Translator.

When Sita was thus lamenting bitterly she beheld Jatayu, the prince of birds on the tree. At his sight, she piteously began, "O worshipful Jatayu, this vicious Rakshasa is carrying me away in helpless condition. This wicked devil is cruel, haughty and powerful, moreover he is armed. Do tell Ram and Lakshman about it, so that they may learn every thing."

CHAPTER XXI.

FIGHT WITH JATAYU.

At that time Yatayu was asleep but hearing these words his sleep was broken and he beheld Ravan and Sita. Then that big bird with a huge sharp beak said, "Ravan ! I am truthful and honest, I am Jatayu, the king of birds. Now my brother ! It is not proper for you to behave like this in my presence. Dasarath's son Ram is the lord of all and he wishes good to every body, and he is like Indra and Varuna. Whom you intend to carry away is the wife of Ram, honourable Sita. It is not at all proper for a viruous king to touch another's wife, specially the wife of the king should always be carefully protected. Give up your low desire concerning another's wife. Another's wife should be protected like one's own wife from the (contaminating) touch of a third person. Wise men do not act in such a manner so that other people can not censure them. People follow the example of their king in the pursuit of religion, wealth, objects of desire and salvation. But lord of the Rakshasas, you are sinful and I wonder how you could acquire such wealth ! It is highly difficult to change one's nature, but royal splendour can not long exist in a vicious man's place. Ravan ! Ram has not injured you in any way then why do you commit such wrong to him. ?"

"In Janasthan-forest Khara and Dushan committed wrong on account of Surpanakha and for that Ram killed them in battle. Now tell me what he has really committed? However, leave Sita without a moment's delay. As thunderbolt destroyed Vritra, that hero will reduce you to ashes by his angry look. You have unwittingly tied a deadly snake with the end of your cloth, and put a halter round your neck of which you are ignorant. One should carry only that weight that might not exhaust him or should take only that he can easily digest. It is not at all good to do such an act which is neither moral nor honourable, but only brings sufferings in its wake."

"Ravan ! I have been ruling over my ancestral kingdom for a long time. I am sixty thousand years old and you are young, you are armed and is stationed in a chariot, yet you won't be able to run away with Janaki smoothly. As logical reasonings can not override the immemorial Vedas* so you won't

* Mark the passage. Amongst the Hindus the Vedas are always regarded to be the highest authority. In matters of religion preference is always given to intuitive truths over inferential knowledge. Kant in his Critique of Moral Reasons emphasises these categorical imperatives. Our Upanishads are also of the same opinion. They say:—

"Not through instruction the atman won. Not through genius or much book-learning." Vide Paul Deussen's Philosophy of the Upanishads—Translator.

be able to take away Sita from my presence. Just wait for a moment and if you be a hero be prepared for a fight. You will surely lie down in the battlefield like Khara, you will be soon killed by Ram, the vanquisher of the Danavas. The two princes have gone to the distant forest but if you see them you will run away in fear. However, you will not succeed in carrying away Ram's darling wife so long I am alive. I shall stake my life for it. Wait a moment; I shall bring you down from your car, like a fruit down from its stalk. You will be duly received in fight according to my might."

Thereupon Ravan adorned with gold ear-rings became restive with anger and rushed towards Jatayu with red hot eyes. Then the two warriors met like two clouds clashing against each other by the rush of wind in the sky,* and a heavy fight ensued as if two winged hills were engaged in a duel! Jatayu warded off all the blows of Ravan and began to tear Ravan's flesh with his beak and claws. Thereupon, Ravan in great rage discharged ten sharp arrows against Jatayu.

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* Cf. 'As when two black clouds with heaven's artillery fraught come ratlling on
over the Caspian ; then stand front to front
Hovering a space, rill winds the signal blow
To join their dark encounter in mid air."

Milton,

All the time, Janaki with tearful eyes was anxiously waiting for the issue of the fight. At this Jatayu without caring for his injuries rushed towards Ravan and broke his golden shafts and bow.

Ravan grew extremely angry at this and took up another bow and smothered him with arrows. Being beset with arrows, Jatayu looked like a bird nestled in a nest. Jatayu then spreading his wings on air attacked and broke the bright shining car of Ravan, and killed the charioteer striking him with his beak. Ravan then lighted on the ground with Janaki in his lap.

But Ravan was delighted seeing Jatayu tired on account of his age and he again ascended the chariot with Janaki. Seeing Ravan thus going away with Janaki in delight, Jatayu ran after him and obstructed his way saying, "Ah, you stupid ! For the destruction of the Rakshasa race you are carrying away his wife whose arrows are deadly like thunderbolts. You are drinking poison with avidity like a thirsty man. Foolish people, ignorant of the consequences of their acts, soon meet with their ruin like you. You have been ensnared by death, how can you escape ? Can a fish escape that has swallowed the hook with a fleshy bait ? Ram and Lakshman are exceedingly powerful ; they won't brook this trespass upon their hermitage. You are a veritable coward and it is nothing but theft, this is not the way in which a brave man acts. Wait and if you be brave, be prepared for a fight.

You will surely be killed like Khara. Those whose ends are nigh commit such sinful acts. You are doing this for your own destruction. Ah, Villain! Who wants to do that whose consequence is evil? Not even the Self-born, the Lord of the three worlds, dare do a sinful act."

Saying this Jatayu swooped on Ravan's back as a rider mounts upon an infuriated elephant. Ravan was greatly tormented by the strikings of his beak. Ravan shook with anger and taking Janaki on the left side of his lap struck Jatayu with fists. Jatayu thereupon tore off the ten left hands of Ravan, but instantly ten new arms sprang up in their place like venomous snakes emerging from an ant-hill. Ravan then left Sita and began to shower kicks and blows on Jatayu. A hard contest ensued and Yatayu fought at the risk of his life for Ram. Ravan, however, hastily took up his sword and cut Jatayu's wings into pieces. Jatayu at once fell on the ground and was on the point of death.

Seeing Jatayu lying on the ground bathed in blood Janaki hastened towards him with a distressed heart like one that goes near a dying friend, and began to weep by his side.

Ravan was extremely delighted seeing that huge bird, like a blue cloud, with yellow breast fallen like an extinguished forest fire.

CHAPTER XXII.

PLIGHT OF SITA

Then Janaki, with moon-like face, embracing Jatayu broke forth in tears, "Dreams, throbbings of limbs, cries of birds and animals are said to presage happiness and sorrow of man. Ram! For me birds and animals are rushing into danger, but you know not what great evil is impending on you. This Jatayu, the prince of birds, came forward to protect me out of compassion, but due to my ill luck lies dead on the ground."

Sita then in great fear began to speak, as if addressing one by her side, "Alas Ram! Alack Lakshman! Save me to-day." Thus she began to weep like a forlorn creature. Ravan then again darted to capture her.

Sita then in fear clung round a tree, as a creeper twines round its trunk.

"Just leave it, leave it," repeating these words Ravan came near Sita, and Janaki cried aloud calling Ram. But Ravan for his death seized her by the hair.

At once, great commotions were seen in Nature. Intense darkness enveloped everything. The sun grew dim and the wind ceased to blow. The Grand Sire of creation, Brahma, seeing this insult on Janaki said, "Perhaps we shall now succeed." The hermits

of the Dandaka forest felt delighted at the prospect of Ravan's death, but they were pained to see with their own eyes Sita dragged by the hair.

Sita was ever crying for Ram and Lakshman. Ravan, however, forcibly took her and soared into the sky. Then Sita of golden hue and clothed in amber robes shone like a lightning in the sky. And Ravan looked like a hill on fire on account of her cloth streaming in the air ! At that time, the petals of red lotuses fragrant with the sweet odour of her body rained on Ravan's lap and her golden cloth streaming in the air shone like crimson clouds of the evening ! Alas, the sweet countenance of Sita in Ravan's lap appeared sad like a lotus torn from its stalk, or like the pale moon coursing its way through a bank of dense, dark clouds. A sweet lily-like odour was coming out of her faultless face, endowed with a graceful forehead, lovely hair, beautiful nose, crimson lips, bright pearly teeth, and expanded eyes. That beautiful face was bathed in tears looked pallid, like the moon in daylight without Ram. Janaki was of golden hue, and Ravan was dark blue to see and she appeared like a golden chain round an elephant's neck, and shone as lightning in the midst of dark clouds, and on account of the jingling sounds of her ornaments, Ravan seemed to be a rumbling cloud ! The flowers from her tresses fell on Ravan's lap and he then shone like the Sumeru peak girt by a cluster of stars !

After a short time the jewelled anklets, glittering as lightning, slipped from her feet, and her shining ornaments, bright as flame, one by one dropped from the sky like a shower of glowing meteors! Her jewelled necklace, bright as the moonshine, slipped from her breast and shone like the stream of Ganges falling from the sky!

The birds clamoured on shaking boughs, fish and other aquatic animals started in water, and the lotus faded in grief for the sorrow of Janaki. Even lions and tigers ran in anger under the shadow of Sita! The mountains with their peaks, like upraised arms, wailed with their fountains of tears!

Even the sun grew dim in sorrow! Ravan was carrying off Ram's Sita, certainly all righteousness had come to an end, thus bemoaned all creatures. A sudden terror seized the young deer and the sylvan gods cast startled looks from their eyes, dim with fright and shook in fear!

Janaki then anxiously looked down for friends again and again. Her dark hair hung in the air, and tears washed off her Tilak. She swooned for Ram and Lakshman.

But cruel Ravan proceeded with her along the sky.

CHAPTER XXIII.

SITA'S SPEECH.

Sita finding Ravan carrying her off through the sky became extremely agitated. Her eyes were red with weeping and rage, and being distressed with sorrow pathetically said,

"Don't you feel ashamed in carrying me thus like a thief finding me quite helpless and alone? It is through your fear that you decoyed my husband to a great distance in the form of that magic deer. Alack! You have also killed Jatayu, the friend who attempted to rescue me. Wonderful is indeed your might, but You are carrying me away (like a trophy) without obtaining me in war. It is a heinous crime to carry away another's wife in a helpless state, and are you not ashamed of such a disgraceful act? You seem to be anxious for the reputation of a hero, but people will now condemn you for this evil deed. Fie on your heroic boasts, disgrace to your conduct, this will put a stigma on your line. What shall I do since yon are running away with me? But wait for a moment and if those two princes meet you, you will not be saved even with your large host. As a bird can not bear the slightest touch of fire, so

you won't be able to bear their shafts. Now if you wish your good just leave me, or my husband will destroy you in his anger. You are forcibly carrying me away for a nefarious end, but your desire will not be fulfilled. I shall not long live amongst the enemies in absence of my godly husband."

"Can't you understand what is good for you ? Men act in a perverse manner, when their ends are nigh and you are behaving like that. The moribund do not like their diets. Since you are undaunted when there is sufficient cause of fear, it seems that the noose of death is already round your neck. You will surely have visions of river of blood, golden trees with flowers of gold and leaves of blue gems, and Salmali tree with iron thorns and of a forest of sword-like leaves. You are taking poison in the form of incurring displeasure of Ram. You are indeed in the trap of death. He who has killed fourteen thousand Rakshasas with his shafts will surely kill you for carrying away his dear wife."

Sita thus said many hard things against Ravan but being overwhelmed with grief and fear she lamented bitterly. Ravan, however, hied through the sky taking that distressed young beauty with him.

When Janaki found that there was no body to save her, she saw five apes seated on a hill. She threw down her silken cloth of golden hue, her scarf and fine ornamants, thinking that they might inform

Ram. But Ravan could not know any thing of it on account of the speed of his flight.

As soon as those articles were thrown the monkeys with their brownish yellow eyes looked up and saw large-eyed Sita weeping bitterly.

CHAPTER XXIV.

SITA'S LOT.

Ravan gradually crossed the Pampa and proceeded towards Lanka. He carried in senseless delight a deadly snake on his lap !

Wicked Ravan after crossing many hills, rivers, lakes and forests with the speed of a flying arrow, arrived at the shore of the sea, full of sharks, crocodiles and whales. At that time the billows of the ocean lashed themselves into eddies in sorrow and fishes and snakes remained inert in water. Then the celestials talked amongst themselves that Ravan's doom was at hand.

Ravan with Sita then entered the great city of Lanka with its well-laid and spacious roads and people thronging at the city gate. And there, entering his palace, he placed distressed Sita as Maydanava kept the demoniac Maya.*

Placing Sita there, Ravan addressing the frightful Rakshasis said, "Let none whether male or female see Sita without my permission. Give her instantly whatever she likes, jewels, ornaments, gold or apparel. If any body uses any harsh expression towards her either wilfully or unwittingly I shall surely put that person to death."

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* Magic or illusion here compared to a maid.

Formidable Ravan after giving these directions to the Rakshasis emerged out of his inner court and thought what to do next. At that time his eyes fell upon eight redoubtable, flesh-eating Rashasas. Proud Ravan, seeing them, highly eulogised their valour and said, "Look here! Hie with your weapons to Janasthan where heroic Khara lived, but depopulated now. Live there fearlessly depending on your valour. There I stationed a large Rakshasa army, but all have been slain by Ram's shafts. Great hostility now exists between myself and Ram. I shall punish him afterwards and I shall not sleep till I destroy him. On his death I shall be as glad as a poor man feels happy on securing wealth. Now go and give me true informations about Ram. Proceed cautiously and try your best to kill him. In many a battle I have witnessed your valour, it is therefore that I send you thither."

Then those eight Rakshasas greeted Ravan and secretly left for Janasthan with that gratifying but difficult mandate.

Ravan too felt delighted by confining Sita within his palace.

After despatching those dreadful Rakshasas to Janasthan, Ravan, in his perverse wit, thought him as crowned with success and he was smitten with lust at the constant thoughts of Sita, thereupon he soon entered the inner court of his palace to see her.

On entering the apartment Ravan saw Sita sur-

rounded by the Rakshasis, weighed down with sorrow and silently shedding tears with a downcast gaze. At that time she looked miserable like a sinking craft overtaken by storm in the sea, or like a doe hounded by the dogs that has been separated from the herd.

Ravan approached her and showed her against her will all the glories of his palace.

"These mansions and palaces," said Ravan, "are full of gems and they rest on crystal, gold, silver and ivory pillars, ornamented with diamond and lapis lazuli. The windows are made of ivory and silver, and are protected with golden nets. Their floors are smooth and white. Thousands of beauties and thousands of beautiful birds live there, and there are tanks and lakes strewn with lilies.

Then wicked Ravan ascended the magnificent alace with Sita as into a heavenly mansion through golden stairs resounding at every step like a deep rumbling drum, and pointed to her the beauties of his castle.

Then to incite cupidity and greed in Sita's mind, he said, "Janaki! Besides the young and the old, I am ruler over thirty-two millions of Rakshasas, and thousands of them speed at my command. Ah, my darling! Thou art dearer to me than life. This life and my kingdom belong to you. I entreat you to be my wife. Be thou the

queen over all the beauties that wait on me. Don't disagree. Janaki! Please accede to my words. I am being consumed with the fire of pssion, have pity on me."

"Look this spacious Lanka, girt by the ocean, is inaccessible even to the Gods and Demons. There is none among the celestials, Yakshas, Gandharvas and Rishis who dare challenge me. My beauty! Ram is a puny creature, he is a man. He is weak and has been deprived of his kingdom, and has no conveyance but walks on foot. What will you do with such poor Ram? Fix your mind on me, I am worthy of you in every respect. Ah, my timid beauty! Youth is ever fleeting, enjoy yourself with me and banish all thoughts about seeing Ram. He can't come here even by riding on his thoughts. Is it rather possible to chain the strong wind of heaven, or to catch hold of the glowing flames of fire? Janaki! I am your guard and I see none in the three worlds who can take you away by force. Now, rule over this extensive Lanka, and I shall be your slave.* The Gods and all the creatures of the world will serve

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*Cf. Shakespeare—"Put off your maiden blushes: avouch the thoughts of your heart with the looks of an empress; take me by the hand, and say, "Harry of England. I am thine": which word thou snalt no sooner bless mine ear withal, but I will tell thee aloud, England is thine, Ireland is thine, France is thine and Henry Plantagent is thine"

you as servants. Take your bath, remove your langour and get ready for enjoying yourself. The sin that you might have committed has already been expatiated by your exile in the forest, now enjoy the reward of your meritorious deeds. Here are beautiful garlands and fine ornaments, let us decorate ourselves with them. My brother Kuvera had a chariot called Puspak. It is highly beautiful, bright like the sun and spacious, and it can travel with the speed in which thoughts can travel. I have procured it by my prowess. Just get upon it and let us go wherever you like. My darling, your face is lovely like a sweet lily, but it has been greatly tarnished with sorrow."

When Ravan said this, Sita covered her face with the end of her cloth and began to shed tears. She was weighed down with sorrow and deeply absorbed in anxious thoughts.

At this Ravan said, "Don't think of shame for this violation. The tie of love with which we two shall be united offends no morality. I do now touch your feet, be pleased with me. I am your obedient servant. Let not my prayer, prompted by ardent love, be in vain. Ravan hath never before lowered his head to any woman's feet."

Saying this, the lord of Lanka, under the spell of death, thought, "She is mine."

CHAPTER XXV.

FACING THE LION.

Then Sita oppressed with sorrow, placing a blade of grass between herself and Ravan, fearlessly said, "Hear me, Rakshasa! There was a famous king named Dasarath. He was like a pillar* of virtue. Virtuous Ram is his son. He is an Ikshwaku prince. He is my husband and my worshipful deity. He is truthful, famous, and possesses mighty arms and large eyes. He with heroic Lakshman will put you to death. Had you attempted to overcome me by force in his presence, surely you would have been slain in battle like Khara. The grim Rakshasas mentioned by you will be as harmless as venomous snakes before Garura. His golden shafts will bring you down as the waves of the Ganges carry off its banks. Thou mayst be incapable of being slain by the Gods or the Asuras, but you won't be able to save yourself by incurring the enmity of Ram. That hero will kill you without doubt, you are doomed like an animal tied to a sacrificial stake. You will be reduced to ashes by the angry look of Ram, as Cupid was by the glance of Rudra. He who can bring down the moon from the sky and dry up

* In the original it is "bridge."

the sea, will rescue Sita from this place. Ah, you villain! Strength, glory and intelligence have left you, and for you, Lanka will be a widowed city. Thou hast torn me from my husband's side, the end of this sinful act will never be good. Powerful Ram and Lakshman will humble your pride. When one's end is nigh he becomes careless about everything. That fateful time has arrived for you, and for this outrage done to me you will be destroyed with all your people. I am devoted wife of Ram and thou shalt never be able to touch my person. An (outcaste) Chandala cannot touch the sacred sacrificial altar sanctified by Mantras and decorated with wreaths. The consort of a swan that sports with her mate amidst lotuses, how can she favour with her glance a water-crow straying amongst weeds and bushes? This body is now useless to me, you may chain it, or destroy it. I shall not preserve it any more nor will ever bear the stigma of unchastity."

Thus said Sita in great indignation and anger.

Hearing these words sufficient to make one's hair stand on their ends, threatening Sita he said, "Hear me, Sita! I shall wait for twelve months. If you do not be favourably inclined during this time, then my cooks will cut you into pieces to serve with the morning meal."*

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* This constant allusion to cannibalism is a set-off against the astounding material civilisation of Ravan.

Then turning towards the grim Rakshasis, Ravan said, "Listen to me, Rakshasis, humble her pride immediately."

At these words, the Rakshasis surrounded Janaki. Ravan then proceeded a few paces shaking the earth by his heroic treads, then turning to them said, "Go, take Sita to the Asoka forest and guard her there carefully, and sometimes by fright and sometimes by solaces try to bring her gradually under your sway, just as a wild elephant is tamed."

Thereupon, the Rakshasis took Sita to the Asoka wood. There were a number of Trees of Desire bearing fruits and flowers granting every prayer, and the place was resonant with the joyous notes of birds

Thenceforth Janaki being surrounded by the Rakshasis passed her days as a doe in the midst of tigresses, and was distressed like a deer caught in a trap and knew not a moment's respite. Grim-visaged Rakshasis roared and intimidated her. She was overwhelmed with grief and fear and swooned in thinking of Ram and Lakshman.*

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* After this, in some texts, a chapter, apparently a subsequent addition, is found in which Indra expressed his joy seeing Ravan entering Lanka with Sita. Brahma then told him that this sinful act would put an end to all the woes of the three worlds, for Ravan was doomed. Brahma then asked Indra to go to the Asoka wood and to sustain Sita's life by

CHAPTER XXVI.

RAM'S RETURN.

In the meantime Ram after slaying Marich in the form of a deer proceeded towards the hermitage to meet Sita. At that time, jackals began to howl after him. Ram was greatly alarmed by their harrowing ries. "Certainly, some thing evil has happened since the jackals are crying so. Perhaps the rovers of night have devoured Janaki. Wicked Marich surely intending some evil unto me cried in imitation of my voice. Had Lakshman heard that cry he would come here leaving Sita alone, or if Sita had heard it then she

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heavenly food. Indra then sent sleep, at whose advent the Rakshasas fell asleep. Indra then appeared before Sita, consoled her with solaces and assured her that her woes would soon end and gave her ambrosial food that would free her from hunger and thirst for years to come. Sita naturally suspected Indra and she asked for proofs that he was the king of Gods and lord of Sachi. Indra then gave Sita proofs ot his divinity by gazing at her with winkless eyes and standing above the ground on air. Sita thus being assured, partook of the heavenly cooked Payasa after offering it to Ram and Lakshman in her thoughts. Sita was thus consoled by Indra, who after greeting her, left with sleep and thought about Ram's success.—Translator.

would send him here. It is the ardent desire of the Rakshasas to kill Janaki. This was why Marich assuming the form of a golden deer had decoyed me to such distance and then cried out, "Alas, Lakshman! I am dying." Since my fight at Janasthan I have incurred the hostility of the Rakshasas. We have left the cottage and I see evil portents on all sides. Heaven knows whether Sita is doing well or not."

At the howlings of the jackals Ram became extremely anxious and with a distressed mind hastily proceeded towards the cottage. The birds and animals that came near Ram at that time began to cry fearfully on his left. After a while Ram saw Lakshman from distance coming towards him. Both looked anxious and sad, and as soon as Ram met Lakshman he reprimanded Lakshman for leaving Sita alone in that dreadful forest, and taking Lakshman's left hand in his palm broke forth with a sad but sweet voice, "Lakshman! You have done great wrong in coming here leaving Janaki alone. Heaven knows what dire calamity has befallen her. I see dark portents everywhere. Surely, Sita has been stolen or eaten up by the Rakshasasa. Look, the animals and birds are crying in the east so I can not by any means think that Janaki is safe. Marich decoyed me to a long distance, I have killed him somehow, and he assumed the form of a Rakshasa at the time of death, yet my mind is sad and cheerless. My left eye is throbbing, it seems Sita is no more.

Either somebody has taken her away, or she is dead, or she is wandering in distance."

Then Ram finding Lakshman sad and distressed asked him, "My boy, she who has followed me to the Dandaka forest and whom you have left alone where is that Janaki now? I have been deprived of my kingdom and passing a nomadic life in the forest, now where is Janaki, my companion in sorrow? Without seeing whom I can not live for a moment where is that Janaki, my help-mate in life? I do not crave for heaven or ruling over the earth in absence of Janaki, of dainty waist, of golden hue like a daughter of Gods. Now tell me the truth whether my darling is alive or not? If I die for Sita, return to Ayodhya alone; mother Kaikeyi will be happy seeing the kingdom quite secured to her son, and mother Kausalya, sad and saintly, will humbly wait upon them. Lakshman! I shall enter the cottage if Sita is alive, or I shall give up my life if she is dead. If she does not greet me with her smile I shall die. Tell me whether she is alive or the Rakshasas have eaten her up through your carelessness? Alas! Janaki is too young and tender, she can't bear any pain. Surely, she has been greatly distressed by my absence. When wicked Marich cried, 'Alas, Lakshman!' were you alarmed by it? Perhaps Janaki, finding the voice like that of mine, sent you through fear, therefore have you hastily come to see me? However, you have not acted right by leaving Sita alone in the forest.

By this you have given opportunity to the cruel Rakshasas for doing evil. These carnavorous Rakshasas have been greatly mortified at Khara's death, so there is not the least doubt that they will kill Sita. Alas ! I have fallen in great distress and I know not what to do, perhaps this was decreed in fate."

Ram thus being greatly distressed by anxious thoughts about Sita, hastily proceeded towards the cottage, taking Lakshman to task. His countenance grew wane with hunger, thirst and fatigue. He was weighed down with sorrow and breathed heavily.

Ram again sorrowfully asked, "My boy ! Since in great confidence I kept Janaki under your charge why did you leave her and come hither ? I have been greatly alarmed seeing you coming here alone without Sita. My left eye and arm are throbbing incessantly and my heart is trembling ever." Lakshman then mournfully replied to sorrowful Ram,

"Arya ! I have not come hither leaving Sita in my free will. She despatched me with harsh words, therefore I have come to you. Janaki heard you crying aloud "Lakshman ! save me." Hearing that cry for your help, Janaki was greatly alarmed and, on account of her love for you, she with tearful eyes urged me again and again to come out. Then to assure her I said, "Worshipful lady ! I do not see any Rakshasa that can frighten Ram. Be now comforted, this

voiee is not that of Arya, but of somebody else. Somebody for some reason has imitated his voice. Who can protect even the Gods, why should he utter this disgraceful cry, "Save me ?" Don't be distressed like a common woman, banish your anxiety and be calm. None has yet been born, nor will any one in future in the three worlds who can conquer Ram."

Thereupon, Janaki wept and cruelly said, 'Ah, you wicked ! You are thinking of winning me after Ram's death, but that desire of yours will never be fulfilled. You have certainly followed Ram as a spy of Bharat, hence you are not going to his rescue even hearing his cries. You are an enemy in disguise ; it is, therefore, that you are seeking for an opportunity."

"At these words of Janaki I was beside myself in rage so I left the cottage without any further delay."

Hearing those words from Lakshman's lips, Ram sorrowfully said, "Lakshman ! You have done wrong by coming here without Sita. You have not acted properly by coming out, disobeying my mandate at the angry words of Janaki, knowing that I can resist the Rakshasas. I am rather displeased with you. The Rakshasa that decoyed me in the form of a deer has been killed by my arrows. When he was struck by me, he assumed the form of a Rakshasa wearing bracelets and cried out in my voice. You have left Janaki hearing that cry."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

SAVARI.

Ram and Lakshman then followed the route indicated by Kavandha for meeting Sugriva.

They proceeded towards the west and found various trees heavy with sweet fruits on the hill. The sun set on their way and they passed the night on the hill. On the morning they arrived at the western bank of the Pampa. There was situate the romantic hermitage of pious Savari covered with various trees.

Seeing that, they approached Savari. No sooner that pious nun saw them she stood up with folded hands. She with great reverence bowed to them and with due rites offered them water to wash their feet.

Ram then addressing Savari said, "O venerable lady of sweet speech! Have you conquered all the obstacles that stand in the way of penance? Are you not progressing in your ascetic rites? Have you subdued your anger? Don't you practise control over your food? How do you enjoy mental felicity? Are not all rules duly observed? Has the service towards the superiors been consummated with success?"

Then aged Savari of accomplished penance, approved by the Siddhas, came forward and said,

"Ram! Seeing you to-day I feel that my penance has attained its consummation, blessed is my birth and successful is my devotion to superiors. I shall attain heaven by worshipping you to-day. Since you have sanctified me by your gentle look, I shall surely attain eternal heaven by your grace. All the ascetics whom I used to serve have repaired in excellent chariots from their hermitages to the heavenly region as soon as you set your foot on the Chitrakuta hill. Those virtuous ascetics at the time of their departure told me that Ram would one day come to this sacred asylum, and asked me to receive Ram and Lakshman with due rites of hospitality."

"Ram, following those words of the hermits I have brought fruits and flowers for you from the bank of the Pampa."

Thereupon, Ram said to Savari cognizant of the past, present and future, "I have heard from Danu about the glory of the ascetics. I wish to witness, with my own eyes, your attainment of that heavenly bliss."

Savari then said, "Ram! Look, there the vast Matanga forest full of beasts and birds, deep as a dense cloud. In this forest the holy hermits cast off their sacred bodies into burning flame by uttering Mantras. There stands the altar Pratyaksha-

sthali, there my reverend spiritual guides used to collect flowers, their hands shaking from fatigue. Behold! The altar is even now surrounded by the halo of their spiritual glory. They could not travel on account of their langour due to continual fasting. Look, there the seven seas appeared as soon as they were invoked. The barks that used to hang after bath on the branches of the trees for drying have not been dried as yet! The lotuses and other flowers with which they used to worship the Gods have not yet been withered. Ram! Thou hast seen all, heard all, permit me now to cast off my body. I shall go to them to whom belongs this hermitage and whom I used to serve."

Ram was greatly pleased at these pious words of Savari. "It is indeed wonderful" exclaimed Ram. "My noble lady! You have shown me due honour. Go wherever you now like to repair."

Then infirm Savari with matted locks and clad in deer skin, with the permission of Ram, cast her body into burning flame.*

She then rose from the flame with an effulgent body glowing like fire. Celestial ornaments and jewels

* The world-renowned scientist Dr. Mitchnikoff in his "Nature of Man" has devoted a long chapter about the universal fear of death where he has shown that old people are more afraid of death than the young ones (of course, there are enough reasons for it) but in ancient India

shone on her body and a sweet scented heavenly garland hung from her neck. Being robed in heavenly apparel she grew exceedingly beautiful and illumined the whole place by the halo of her glory, like the glare of lightning. Then through Samadhi she reached that blissful region inhabited by great saints.

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we find a glorious exception to this where a man prepared himself for death and when the supreme moment came, he gave up his ghost in cheerful resignation. At the fag end of life a saint might sometimes cast off his mortal frame by the yogic concentration of his soul. This is not suicide, but a glorious resurrection so to say. It is like the rising of the phoenix, the self-begotten and self-perpetuating bird, in new splendour from the ashes !

CHAPTER XXVII.

RAM'S LAMENT.

As Ram proceeded towards the cottage he began to stumble on the way and shook in all his limbs. He saw dark portents everywhere and repeatedly questioned Lakshman about Sita's safety. He hastened towards the cottage being extremely anxious to meet her. Ram reached the cottage with Lakshman, but found it desolate. He then entered the cottage and hied to the sporting ground of Sita, but there was no Sita. His hairs stood on their ends, and was overwhelmed with anxiety. Tossing his arms up (in grief) he sought for her hither and thither.

The cottage without Sita looked like a tank in winter shorn of the beauty of the lotus. The tree seemed to be weeping, flowers faded, and was bereft of their glory, all beasts and birds were mute with sorrow. The cottage looked quite desolate and disturbed; Kusha grass, deer-skins, and twigs of Kusha were scattered hither and thither, as if the sylvan deities left the place in hurry. Ram burst into bitter lamentatians at the sight of that empty cottage.

"Has Janaki been carried away by some body, or

is she no more? Who has been satisfied with her blood? Has she concealed herself? Has she gone out for gathering fruits and flowers, or has she left for the stream to fetch water?"

Then Ram wilh eyes red (with weeping) and being mad with grief searched all possible places for Janaki, but could not find her anywhere. He roamed through hills and forests and came on the banks of rivers and streams, and approaching each object he questioned about Sita.

"O, Kadamva!" said he, "My darling is quite fond of you, tell me if thou hast seen her? Tell me, O Bilwa, hast thou seen her whose breasts are round like thy fruits, whose body is soft like tender, sprouting leaves, and who was clad in a yellow silken cloth? O, Arjun! You were dear to slim Janaki, tell me now whether she is now alive or not?* O, Maruvaka! You look beautiful being I covered with leaves and

* Please mark, nature here is not only living and beautiful but loving and emotional. Wordsworth might have a new message for the English but certainly not for India. India developed both a philosophical and a poetic pantheism long, long before the birth of English language—the regret is that we know so little of our past. In this connection, my remarks in page 406 should be taken liberally; they, of course, do not apply to such magnificent things. Poetry obviously revives after the death of Khara down to the recovery of Sita. It is abundantly clear that we do not get every thing here from great Valmiki, this is why poetry flags at different places,

flowers and being twined by creepers, you certainly know where is now Janaki, whose thighs are smooth as thy bark. Tilaka! Thou art chief of the trees, the bees hum round you, and thou art an object of Sita's affection; certainly thou knowest where she tarries now? O, Asoka! You are the destroyer of grief.† I am senseless with grief for Sita, just remove my sorrows by pointing out Sita to me. O, Palm! My darling's breast is like your ripe fruits, please tell if thou hast seen her. Ah, O, Rose apple! Tell me if thou hast met that Sita of golden hue. O Karinarkar! Being adorned with flowers you look quite beautiful to-day, gentle Janaki is quite fond of you, tell me if thou hast seen her."

Ram thus questioned every tree, such as mango, Pomegranate, Sandal, Sal, Ketaka, Kadamva, Vakul, Kurava, and roamed through the forest mad with grief.

Ram then questioned the wild animals of the forest for Sita. Addressing the woodland fawn, Ram said, "Ah, Dear! Surely thou knowest gazelle-eyed Sita, is she now sporting with the does? O, Elephant! Whose thighs are round like your trunk is no doubt known to you, tell me if thou hast seen

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especially when one interpolator steps in with exaggerated notions of superhuman agencies, a feature greatly noticeable in the Balakanda, Ayodhyakanda and the Uttarakanda.

† Soka means grief. Asoka—without grief.

her. O, Tiger! The countenance of my darling is beautiful like the moon, now tell me without any hesitation if thou hast seen her anywhere."

"Ah, my lotus-eyed beauty! Why dost thou fly away, just now I have caught your sight! Why dost thou not reply to my words from behind the tree? Stop! Thou hast grown extremely unkind to me. You never mocked me before, then why dost thou slight me now? My love! I have recognised thee by the yellow silken cloth. Ah, you are running away fast. If thou has any pity for me, please stop, don't go further."

"Alas! She is not Sita of winning smile. Certainly, carnivorous Rakshasas have devoured her tearing up her limbs, or she would not have neglected me thus in my grief. Ah, how lovely was Janaki's nose! How beautiful were her teeth! And how tempting were those lips! That fair countenance, beautiful like the full moon, were in the jaws of the Rakshasas, and when she shrieked in agony the Rakshasas devoured her soft, fragrant neck adorned with golden chain. Her arms soft as tender leaves and adorned with ornaments and that shook like tendrils were eaten up by the Rakshasas. Alas! It is for the Rakshasas that I left young Sita. Alas! Although she had friends yet she was helpless! Lakshman! Have you met my darling anywhere? Alas, My love! Alas, Sita! Where hast thou gone?"

Ram thus searched for Sita through the forest.

Sometimes he ran fast, sometimes he whirled round and round, and became frantic with grief. Thus ceaslessy he paced to and fro through the forest. He could not give up his hope for Sita and he renewed the search with greater vigour.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

OCEAN OF GRIEF.

Ram long searched for Sita, but could not find her anywhere, and with upraised arms burst into bitter cries, "Brother Lakshman! Where is Sita? Where has she gone? Who has stolen her? Who has devoured her? My love! If you are bent upon in playing jokes with me by hiding yourself behind the the trees, please refrain from it. I have been greatly distressed by your absence, come quick to my side. The young fawns with whom you used to play are brooding over your absence with tearful eyes. Brother! I have no more Janaki. I shall not live in her absence. Father from the next world will surely see me die in grief for Sita and he will say 'I am bound by pledge, then why hast thou come here before the expiry of the full term (of banishment)?' And for this fault he will surely take me to task for my meanness and wilful conduct. Janaki! I am weak, poor and absolutely under your sway. Where dost thou go casting me aside, as fame leaves the deceitful? Don't leave me, my love, I shall then surely die."

Ram thus lamented bitterly but got no sight of Sita,

Then Lakshman finding Ram immersed in grief and exhausted like a tusker stuck in deep mud,

said in sweet consoling words, "O hero! Do not be overwhelmed with grief. Let two of us now carefully search for her. Janaki loves to stray about in the woods of yonder hill furnished with beautiful caves, perhaps she has gone there. Or, she has repaired to the lotus-strewn tank, or to the river abounding in fish and its bank covered with canes, or to see how we search for her and to frighten us she has concealed herself somewhere. O, worshipful one! Don't be sad, let us now search the whole forest."

Then Ram with Lakshman searched for Sita in the hill, in the valley, in the forest, near the rill, round the lake, but Sita was nowhere.

Ram then addressing Lakshman said, "My boy! I have not found Sita in the hill."

Lakshman sorrowfully returned, "As Vishnu rules the world by subduing Vali so you will recover Sita straying through the Dandaka forest." Thereupon, Ram pathetically said, "My boy, I have sought for her in the forest, in the hill, in the cave, near the rill, near lotus-strewn pool, but couldn't find Janaki, dearer than life."

Ram then wept bitterly and became crazed with grief, a langour benumbed his limbs, and his understanding became clouded. He heaved long, hot sighs and evercried, "Alas, my love!"

Thereupon, Lakshman with joined hands tried to console him in various means, but Ram paid no heed to his words and shed an ocean of tears.

Ram then being crazed with grief and love, seemed to behold Sita in his hallucination, and addressing her said, "My love! You are much fond of flowers, why hast thou then covered thyself with Asoka blossoms to incite my grief? Your thighs are well-shaped like the plantain tree and you have concealed them in the plantain grove, but I see them quite distinctly. Janaki! Just for joke you have concealed yourself in the Karnika grove, but what is sport to one is death to another. Please refrain from it, it is not consistent with hermitage-life. I now fully realise that you are fond of jests. But come, my large-eyed love, the cottage is desolate without you."

"Lakshman! Perhaps the demons have stolen away Sita, or eaten her up, or she could not have forsaken me seeing me thus distressed. These deer with their tears confirm my suspicion Alas, devoted Janaki! Where hast thou gone? Kaikeyi's desire has been fulfilled. I came out with Sita, but how shall I return alone.? People will think me weak and cruel. Janaki's death proves that I have not the least prowess. On my return from the forest when King Janak will come to enquire after my welfare how shall I meet him? He will certainly be mortified with grief for not seeing my Sita. Happy is father for he had not to suffer this sorrow. Now tell me, brother! How shall I return to Ayodhya ruled by Bharat? I shall not be happy even in heaven

without Sita. I shan't be able to live anyhow without Sita, so go back leaving me in the forest, and after embracing Bharat tell him that I have given him permission to rule over the kingdom. After saying this to Bharat, convey my greetings to Kaikeyi, Sumitra and Kausalya in order. I know you never neglect my words, relate at length about the destruction of Janaki to my mother, and just help her to bear the sorrow."

Lakshman was greatly pained at these lamentations of Ram, his face grew pale and was extremely distressed in mind.

Ram was overwhelmed with grief and finding Lakshman stricken with sorrow heaved a deep, hot sigh and said with tears, "My boy ! Perhaps there is not a greater sinner than myself on earth. Misfortunes after misfortunes have crushed my heart and soul. Formerly, I have committed many sins through my wayward will, therefore I am reaping the harvest of sorrow one after another. I have been deprived of kingdom, friends and mother. It is for me that father has died. All these recollections crowd in my mind and fill my heart with grief. Brother ! I forgot every sorrow by coming into the forest, with Janaki, but her separation like fire has rekindled them again."

"Alas ! When the Rakshasas carried her off, how piteously she shrieked in fear and how bitterly she wept. Her white round breast perfumed with yellow

sandal paste was surely bathed in blood. But, alas! I am not dead yet! The countenance over which waved her curled hair, from which ever emitted clear, silvery accents, has certainly been shorn of its beauty like the moon under the grip of Rahu. Perhaps the blood-thirsty Rakshasas have torn into pieces the sweet neck of my darling adorned with gold chain. I was absent from the cottage and during that time they dragged her by force and she cried like a distressed doe."

"Ah, how liberal and sweet she was. At the foot of this hill sitting by me, how smilingly she talked to me! Let us now search for her. She has gone to the Godavari, the best of the streams, for she loved it most, or that lotus-eyed beauty has gone to some pool to gather lotuses, or has entered some blossoming wood resonant with the notes of birds."

Alas! This is not to be, she won't go anywhere alone out of fear."

"O Sun! You see all acts of men, you are witness to all truth and falsehood, now tell me where my darling has gone? O wind, you have free access everywhere and are aware of everything of the three worlds, tell me whether Sita, the glory of her race, is dead or alive? Or some body has stolen her? Have you seen her on any path?"

Then heroic Lakshman seeing Ram thus stupefied with grief, said, "Arya! Banish your despair, let us

be up ond doing in her search. Energetic people are never borne down by arduous task."

Ram did not pay any heed to the valiant words of Lakshman, but was cast down with sorrow.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE WRATH OF RAM.

Ram addressing Lakshman entreatingly said, "Go quick to the Godavari and ascertain whether Janaki has gone there to gather the water-lilies ?"

Being thus addressed by Ram, Lakshman went to the fair stream Godavari, reconnoitering every thing about it. After a short time he came back and said, "Arya! I did not find worshipful Sita in any bathing place of the Godavari. I called aloud, but none answered any call. I knew not where is that sweet lady, the destroyer of all sorrows."

Ram then himself went to the Godavari and questioned everything near him about Janaki, but none dare to disclose the fact that Ravan had stolen away Sita. Ram then being frantic with grief again and again asked the river, beasts and birds, but Godavari made no reply, she was greatly frightened thinking of terrible Ravan,

Ram then in despair told Lakshman, "My boy! The Godavari does not say anything about Sita. Now what shall I say to king Janak and how shall I speak of this loss of Janaki to mother? Janaki assuaged all my sorrows of exile, but where is she gone now? In absence of Sita, the nights will surely appear too

long to me for want of sleep. If there is any chance of getting Sita I shall roam through the whole of Janasthan and the valley of the Mandakini. Lo! The deer are casting their glances repeatedly on me, as if they have something to speak to me."

Then turning to the deer, Ram asked with a voice choked with tears, "Tell me, ye deer, where is Janaki?" Being thus addressed by Ram, the deer stood up, went towards the south along the route through which Sita had been taken away, and as they proceeded they again and again looked up at the sky and again and again looked on Ram.

Lakshman noticed their behaviour and read their silent signals, supplying the place of speech. He then said to Ram, "O worshipful lord! When you questioned the deer about Janaki, they stood up and pointed towards the south, let us proceed in that direction we may perchance find Jauaki there, or some mementoes of her."

Ram agreed to Lakshman's proposal and instantly proceeded with him towards the south, surveying all round him carefully, talking of Janaki on their way. When they were going they came across a bunch of flowers lying on the road-side. At that heroic Ram said to Lakshman, "Brother! The flowers I gave to Janaki and which she put on in her tresses I recognise these to be the same. Perhaps the sun, the wind and the earth have preserved them for my benefit."

Ram then turning to a mountain rill said, "O hill! I have lost my Janaki. Hast thou seen that beautious damsel in this romantic forest?"

A moment after, as a lion roars against an humble animal, Ram broke forth in wrath, "Point out to me that damsel of golden limbs and of golden hue or I shall break down your peaks."

But the mountain showed no Janaki, and Ram angrily said, "O hill, I shall reduce you to ashes with all the trees and creepers by my arrows, and none will visit those barren heaps." Then turning to the rill he said, "If the stream does not speak about my moon-like beauty I shall dry her up."

Thus while Ram spoke to Lakshman, as if through his anger he would scorch everything with the fire of his eyes, he saw huge foot-prints of the Rakshasas on the ground. He also saw the foot-prints of Sita as she ran to and fro being chased by the Rakshasas. At a little distance he also found a broken bow, broken quivers, and broken chariot.

At that sight Ram with great excitement said, "Behold Janaki's ornaments are strewn on the ground! There lies her beautiful necklace! Look, the ground is covered with drops of blood, like the spray of liquid gold! Surely the rovers of night have devoured her. Here occurred a fierce fight between two giants for her. Look! There lies the snapped, the beautiful bow, inlaid with pearls and gems! There lies the shattered golden armour, resplendent

as the newly risen sun, adorned with lazulite studs! There lies the broken-staff-umbrella with hundred ribs and decked with wreaths! Lo! What large asses with hideous faces and adorned with golden harness have been killed! What a shining flag-staff, bright as flame! The battle car is broken and lies upside down!

"What formidable arrows with long, large blades! There lies the charioteer dead, holding the reins and whip in his hands! Whose are these, my boy? Do they belong to the Gods or to the demons? The foot-prints are of a male person, these must be of a rover of night. I have deadly enmity with these cruel villains. They have now either stolen Janaki or eaten her up. Alas! Righteousness could not protect Sita in the forest and the Gods were unkind to me."

"My boy! People set at naught Him who is the Creator, Sustainer and Destroyer of the world for His compassion and mercy. Likewise the Gods finding me gentle, generous have deemed me weak. My virtues have turned into faults. But henceforth you will behold my change. As the Doomsday-sun rises with fierce glare so my valour will manifest itself for the destruction of all creatures. It will not be a happy day for the Yakshas, the Rakshasas, the Pishachas, the Kinnaras, or men. I shall overcast the sky with my arrows and smother all and render them quite inert. I will stop the courses of the

planets, screen the moon, rob the sun and fire of their glare and cover the world with darkness. I will crush mountains, dry ocean, and destroy all vegetation. If the Gods do not return to me now Sita, dead or alive, I will destroy the creation in my wrath. Everybody will immediatly experience my valour. I will destroy the three worlds with all the Demons, Rakshasas and Pishachas in them."

Saying this Ram tightened the bark round his loins and gathered his matted lock. His eyes became red with anger, his lips began to quiver. He looked like Rudra about to slay the demon Tripura.

He took up the bow from Lakshman's hand and by fixing flaming, deadly arrow burned in rage like a kindled flame. "Lakshman!" said he, "As none can resist age, death, time and accidents so none will be able to withstand my rage."

Ram, like the Doomsday fire was about to destroy the creation, and breathing heavily he looked at the stringed bow.

Before this, Lakshman had not seen such a change in Ram. Seeing Ram besides himself with rage, Lakshman with folded hands and dried up countenance said, "Arya! Formerly, you were gentle, free from evil intentions and engaged in doing good to others, and it is not becoming of man like you to renounce your nature. Eternal fame waits on you, as beauty is inseparable from the moon, light from the sun, motion from the wind and forgiveness from

the earth. Therefore, it is not proper for you to destroy others for one's crime."

"There lies broken a well-equipped battle-car. I can infer why it is broken. The ground also is rent by the hoofs of the horses and covered with drops of blood. A fierce fight seemed to have taken at this place. This fight was with one warrior, and not with many. I do not find the foot-prints of an army here. So it is not proper to destroy the world for one's crime. Kings, that are just, mete out punishment proportionate to the crime. Arya! You are the shelter and guide of all. Who will think well this outrage on your wife? As the Ritwiga priests can not do any harm to those who have been initiated by them, so the Gods, the Gandharvas, the demons, the hills, the rivers won't be able to do anything unplesant to you. Now, taking the bow in your hand search for the abductor of your wife with me and the hermits. So long we do not find her we shall vigilantly search hills, forests, streams, caves, lakes, seas, and the land of the Gods and the Gandharvas. If the Gods do not return your wife peacefully then do what you consider best. If you do not get back your Janaki by truce, by virtue of your good conduct, morality, and modesty then destroy everything by your gold-feathered arrow resembling like the thunderbolt."

CHAPTER XXX.

RAM PACIFIED.

Ram, at this, being smitten with grief began to weep like a helpless creature. Lakshman then entreated him by the feet and for consoling him said, "O, worshipful lord! As the Gods obtained nectar so king Dasarath got you after great penance and sacrifice. I have heard from Bharat that father died for you. If you be nervous and so distressed then patience can not be expected of ordinary people. Please compose yourself. Who is not visited by misfortune? It burns one like fire, but is soon extinguished. In short, this is the destiny of every corporal being and it must be admitted that this is ordained by Heaven. You see, king Yayati first went to heaven, but subsequently he fell from it. The priest of our family, Vasistha, had hundred sons but he lost them in one day. She who is the mother of all, and is adored of all, that mother Earth quakes at times, and those that are the images of righteousness, and the eyes of the world themselves suffer from eclipse. In short, mighty creatures and Gods also have to suffer misfortunes. It is said that even Indra and other Gods are subject to pleasure and pain. So do not be over-

whelmed. Even if Janaki be dead you should not lament like an ordinary man. Those who are wise like you and can see everything and cooly ascertain the cause, bear patiently even in great distress. Do thou therefore decide your course of action by your reason. Intelligent people can apprehend what is good and what is evil. Hardly any happiness ensues from the performance of such acts that are of uncertain issue, and whose nature is unknown. O hero, it is you who gave me all such counsels before. Who will presume to advise you? Even Vrihaspati is incapable of that. Even the Gods can not measure thy intelligence which is now clouded in sorrow. You possess both natural and supernatural powers, now by marshalling them get ready for the destruction of your enemy. What necessity is there for destroying all, destroy him who is the real enemy."

Ram who could easily grasp the pith of everything, agreed to Lakshman's reasonable proposal. He subdued his rage and asked Lakshman, "Tell me, brother, what shall we do now? Where shall we go? Just think of the means by which we can find out Janaki."

Lakshman replied, "Arya! This is Janasthan. The place is full of Rakshasas and covered with trees and creepers. Here are hill-fortresses, cleft rocks and caves full of wild animals. The Kinnaras and the Gandharvas live here. Let us carefully search

the place. In calamities, a man like you should remain unmoved like a hill undisturbed by the course of wind."

Ram then with Lakshman began to search for Sita. At one place he found Jatayu lying in a pool of blood. At that sight Ram exclaimed, "My boy! This wretch has devoured my Janaki. Surely, it is a Rakshasa, roaming in the forest in the form of a a bird. He is now taking rest after devouring Sita. I shall kill it immediately with my sharp arrow."

Saying this Ram angrily fixed a deadly shaft to his bow, as if shaking the earth and the sea by his angry treads.

When Ram came near, Jatayu vomitting frothy blood piteously said, "Ah hero, may you live long! Whom you are searching in the forest like the medicinal herb that may restore life has been robbed by mighty Ravan along with my life. She was defenceless and in that opportunity that wicked villain carried her by force. When he saw that I came forward for her protection he threw me down on the ground. These are his bow, quivers, umbrella, car, which I broke down by my kicks, and killed the charioteer by striking him with my claws. But when I became exhausted he cut off my wings and carried away Sita through the sky. I have been already wounded by the Rakshasa, so spare me now."

When Ram got this information of Sita from Jatayu his grief was doubly increased and throwing

aside his bow and arrow embraced Jatayu rolling on the earth and began to weep. Then Lakshman fell prostrate by the side of a thorny path and began to shed tears with deep long sighs. Ram was pained at that sight and softly began, "My boy, loss of kingdom, exile in the forest, loss of Sita and death of Jatayu are the decrees of Fate. To speak the truth my bad luck can even burn fire itself. If I enter the ocean, through my bad luck it will become dry. Perhaps there is not a more unlucky man in the world than myself. It is due to my ill luck that father is dead."

Saying this Ram with filial affection began to touch Jatayu's body and embracing him said, "Tell me, where is my Janaki ?" And thus saying he fell upon the earth.

CHAPTER XXXI.

DEATH OF JATAYU.

Then Ram, darling of the people, said, "Lakshman! This king of the birds* has died for my work. His voice has grown faint, his end is nigh and is staring with dim, blank eyes. O Jatayu! If you have any more power of speech tell me how have you met with this fate? What harm have I done to Ravan? Why he has stolen my Sita? What did Janaki say? How mighty is Ravan? How he looks? What he does and where does he live?"

Then pious Jatayu replied, "My boy! Wicked Ravan creating storm and darkness by magic carried off Sita through the sky. When I grew greatly exhausted in the fight, he clipped my wings and flew to the south. O Ram! The breath of my life is about to flee. I see before me trees of gold having hair resembling the Ushir grass. The moment when Ravan carried away Sita is called "Vindya." Whoever takes away anything (dishonestly) on this

* Bird he cannot be. Was there any tribe known as the Vihangas (bird)? Perhaps they got this appellation for decorating their bodies with feathers, as are seen among the Red Indians. Apparently some of the non-Aryan tribes of India were described as serpents, etc. as the Nagas.

moment soon meets with his destruction like a fish devouring a hook, and the owner in no time gets back his lost property. But Ravan could not know this at that time. So don't be overwhelmed with grief for Sita. You will soon recover her."

When dying Jatayu was saying this he began to vomit blood with particles of mucus.

"Son of Visvasrava, brother of Kuvera," he said but his voice was choked.

"Speak, speak," cried Ram in great excitement with folded hands, but Jatayu expired that very moment. His head rolled on the dust and he lay prostrate on the ground.

When copper-eyed Jatayu, huge as a mountain, died, Ram broke forth in deep sorrow, "Lakshman! Who lived for a long time in the Dandaka forest infested by the Rakshasas and who was quite energetic inspite of his great age is now lying dead. How inexorable is Death. This helpful king of the birds have met with death for rescuing Sita. He has died only for me, casting aside his vast ancestral territory. Virtuous persons are found among all castes and people, even amongst the birds are found honest giving shelter to the distressed seeking for protection. I have been greatly pained. He is adorable to me like king Dasarath. Now gather woods for his cremation, I shall myself set fire to the funeral pyre of him who has died for me. O fatherly Jatayu! May you attain that high region that is

reached by the heroes who are not afraid of entering the field of battle, that is attained by the giver of lands, by the performers of sacrifices and by those who keep sacred fire always alive* in the family. Ah, hero, I am myself setting fire to the pyre, may you attain excellent regions hereafter."

Saying this Ram placed Jatayu on the funeral pyre as one would do to his kinsman.

Then with Lakshman Ram entered the forest, slaughtered some deer and taking off their meat he offered Pindas to Jatayu and fed the birds with them by placing them on soft turfs. Then Ram recited those Mantras that are done by the Brahmans for the attainment of heaven by the dead. He then went to the Godavari with Lakshman and after bathing in the stream performed in due form the watery rites in honour of the dead. Jatayu met with death at the hands of the Rakshasa after achieving an arduous and glorious deed and being cremated by saintly Ram he attained heavenly bliss.

After this Ram and Lakshman armed with bows, quivers and swords set out in quest of Janaki and proceeded towards the south west direction.

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* Something like fire-worship as found in the Zorastrian creed.

CHAPTER XXXII.

KAVANDHA.

They proeeeded through a dense dreary forest covered with trees and creepers and unvisited by man. They hurriedly passed through it and entered deep and inaccessible Krauncha forest six miles from Janasthan. It was dark like a deep blue cloud and full of wild animals and birds, and there were flowers of various bright hue. Issuing from the Krauncha forest, after a distance of six miles they arrived at the dreadful abode of elephants. There the woods grew very dense and it abounded with ferocious animals. There they saw a deep cave like a fathomless abyss. On coming near the cave they espied a loathsome and hedious Rakshasi whose sight was enough to terrify the weak. She was tall, her belly hanging, teeth sharp, hair dishevelled and skin rough. She eschewing a piece of flesh came near them and embraced Lakshman ahead of the two saying, "Come, let us dally in amorous sports. My name is Ayomukhee. You are my dear lover. I am also like a gem to you. Come my lord, live with me happily for ever in these mountain fastnesses and on the banks of the stream."

Lakshman was greatly enraged at this and cut off her nose, ears and breast. The Rakshasi fled away uttering terrible yells in agony.

Thereafter, they proceeded courageously toa dense forest. Then gentle Lakshman with joined hands respectfully said to Ram, "My arms are throbbing intensely, a great anxiety weighs upon my mind. I see evil portents round me. Please be on guard, do not neglect my words. I apprehend some danger from these evil omens. But from the cries of the fearful Banyulaka bird I think that will attend upon us in fight."

As the two brothers were looking for Sita they heard a terrific sound. The whole forest seemed to be panic-stricken at that. Thereupon Ram instantly took up his sword and proceeded carefully to ascertain its cause. In front of them they found a formidable Rakshasa, with a very spacious chest having no head or neck. His mouth was set on his belly and there was only one eye on his brow. With long lashes, yellow in colour it was dreadful and burning like a flame of fire. He was dark like a cloud and huge as a hill and arms long as a league. His body was covered with bristling hair, and his tongue was protuding through his enormous teeth. With terrible roar like a thundering cloud he was feasting upon fierce lions, tigers, bears and other wild animals and birds.

That formidable Rakshasa seeing Ram and Lakshman obstructed their way. Then they stepped aside and began to survey him.

Then the Rakshasa stretching his hands got hold

of the two brothers and began to crush them with his might. They were being forcibly dragged. Heroic Ram patient by nature was not least affected by it, but Lakshman was greatly distressed and sorrowfully said to Ram, "Lo! I am being overpowered by the Rakshasa, now run away by offering me as victim. You will perhaps soon get back Janaki and when you get back your kingdom, just remember me occasionally."

Ram answered, "My brave brother! Don't be frightened for nothing. A man like you is never overwhelmed by danger."

Then that cruel Kavandha asked, "Who are you? With your bows and swords and with broad shoulders you look like bulls with sharp horns. Tell me, what business you have come here for? You have quite accidentally come within my sight. I am hungry, so there is no escape for you."

Ram at this said to terrified Lakshman, "We are suffering misfortune after misfortune, but now we are in the peril of our life. Fate is quite inexorable and nothing is impossible in the decree of fate. We too are now borne down by disaster. Even the heroes sometimes give way in fight like bridges of sand."

Having said this Ram stood there in calm courage.

Kavandha then encircling Ram and Lakshman by arm asked, "Ah Kshatriya boys! Are you stand-

ing here seeing me hungry? Ah foolish chaps! Fate has sent you as my food."

Then Lakshman to display his valour told Ram, "Arya! This low Rakshasa will soon seize us. Let us now without delay cut off his two huge arms with sword. I see his strength lies in his arms. It is ignominous for a Kshatriya to kill one who can not use arms so defenceless like an animal brought for sacrifice. We should not, therefore, put an end to the life of this Rakshasa."

Hearing these words Kavandha flew into rage. He opened his mouth and tried to devour them. At that moment Ram cut off his right arm and Lakshman his left. Kavandha fell down by uttering a terrific yell. He asked who they were. Thereupon Lakshman said, "O Raksasha! He is heroic Ram of the Ikshwaku line, and I am his younger brother. Mother stood in the way of his installation to the throne and sent him to exile. This is why God-like mighty Ram is residing in the forest with me and his wife. In this state when he was absent a Rakshasa has carried off his wife. We are out in search of her. Now tell me who are you with your flaming mouth set in the chest. Why do you roam about as a headless monster?"

Kavandha then remembered the words of Indra and then cheerfully welcoming them said, "O hero! Fortunately I have met you, fortunately my arms have been cut, let me now tell how through my

insolence I have undergone this hideous metamorphosis."

"Ram! I was beautiful like Indra and like the sun and the moon, but I used to frighten the Rishis by assuming the form of a formidable Rakshasa. Once upon a time a hermit, named Sthulashira, was gathering wild fruits and roots. I snatched them from him assuming this form. At this the Rishi was greatly enraged and he cursed me saying that henceforth I would be as cruel and hideous as the assumed guise."

"Then I entreated him again and again for the expatiation of that curse. Then the Rishi said, 'When Ram will cut off your arm and burn you in the forest you will get back your former beautiful form.' "

"Lakshman! I am Danu, the son of Sri Danava, the form that you see is due to the curse of Indra. Once I performed great penance, thereupon Grand Sire Brahma granted me long life as a boon, and I grew proud in consequence of that. I thought since I was to live long what Indra would do to me. Being elated with this thought I challenged Indra in a fight. Indra with his thunderbolt pressed inside my body my head and thighs. I prayed humbly for life so he did not kill me and said, 'Let Brahma's wish be fulfilled,' I then said that you have shattered my thighs and head by the thunderbolt how am I to live henceforward? Indra then set two long arms

and a mouth with sharp teeth to my belly. I seize wild animals with my long arms and eat them. Indra at that time said that when in a fight Ram and Lakshman would cut off your two arms you would then attain heaven."

"Arya! I used to take everything whatever I could seize with my hands. I thought that once Ram and Lakshman would come within my clutch and they would destroy my body. O hero! Thou art that Ram. May good betide you. Sthulashira told me that none but Ram would be able to destroy me and that has come to be true. Now set fire to my body I shall give you good advice and show you a helping friend."

Ram then said, "Kavandha! I was out with Lakshman in Janasthan and during our absence Ravan has stolen away my chaste wife Sita. I have only come to know the name of that wicked villain but I do not know anything about his residence, age, prowess or how he looks. We are now roaming about in helpless state, please do us some favour. O hero! We shall dig a big hole here and burn your corpse by collecting dry wood broken by the trunks of the elephants. Tell me who has carried away my Sita. If you know the truth do me the favour by stating it."

Thereupon Kavandha answered, "Prince! I don't know Janaki, I have not that supernatural power of knowledge now. I shall resume my former shape

after death and shall then tell you who knows about her. I have lost that divine foresight on account of my curse, so before I am reduced to ashes, I won't be able to know which formidable Rakshasa has carried off your wife. So you first duly cremate my body before the sun goes down. I shall then name to you a person who knows everything about the Rakshasas. Make friendship with him. He is just and you will get great help from him in your present circumstance. There is nothing unknown to him in the three worlds. Once upon a time for some reason he actually travelled through the three worlds."

Then a funeral pyre was prepared in a hollow of the hill. Lakshman set fire to it and fire began to burn that huge fatty body like a lump of butter.

After a while Kavandha cheerfully rose from the flame. He was clad in a white piece of cloth, his body was decked with beautiful ornaments and an excellent garland hung from his neck. He got upon an effulgent car yoked with swans and ascending the sky said,

"Ram ! Listen to me, as to how you will get back Sita. On the earth there are only six ways of attaining one's object as peace and war.* One who is in

* The six political means of attaining object :—Sandhi—peace ; Vigraha—war ; Yan—military expedition ; Ashana—

distress should mix with another like him. Now with Lakshman you are in distress and have been suffering from the loss of your wife. So in these circumstances make friendship with one who is equally distressed like you. Besides this I do not see any other means of your attaining success."

"Ram! There is a mighty monkey named Sugriva. He was begotten by the sun unto the wife of Riksharaj. Vali, the son of Indra, is his brother. He has driven off Sugriva from the kingdom. He is now dwelling on the Rishymuka hill on the bank of the Pampa along with four other monkeys. He is modest, intelligent, gentle, capable, effulgent and of firm determination. He will be a friend and help to you in your quest for Sita. Don't be overwhelmed with grief. Fate is inexorable, what is to be must be. So leave this place quickly. To avoid all evil immediately contract friendship in the presence of sacred fire. Don't despise him because he is a Vanara. He is gratefnl, helping and capable of assuming different forms at will. You will get great help from him, or at least he will never be indifferent to your work. He now roams near the bank of the Pampa in fear of Vali who has driven him away."

"Ram! Go now and placing thy weapons in the presence of attesting fire in solemn truth, contract

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halting; Daidhibhava—sowing dissension among the enemies; Samashraya—seeking protection.

"Lakshman! This lovely stream of Pampa, being girt with various blossoming trees and lovely creepers, appears like a beauty decked in jewels. There stands on its bank the Rishyamukha tinged with the hues of various metals as mentioned by Kavandha. There resides Sugriva the son of the great Riksharaja. Now, we may go to him without delay. I can not bear the pangs of Sita's separation any more. O Lakshman! How shall I live without Sita? I have been deprived of my kingdom, I am really poorly, and Sita is my wife. Alas! I know not whether Janaki will survive this separation or not."

Thus lamenting Ram, smitten with sorrow and love for Sita, proceeded slowly towards the beautiful Pampa, bright with lotuses, and adorned on all sides by flowery woods, resounding with the sweet notes of various birds.

THE END OF THE ARANYA KANDAM.

Due on 30th